HUNTER × HUNTER™

ハンター × ハンター

2

SHONEN JUMP ADVANCED

Story & Art by
YOSHIHIRO TOGASHI

冨樫義博

Go on without me. I'll catch up in about two minutes.

Yoshihiro Togashi

Yoshihiro Togashi's manga career began in 1986 at the age of 20, when he won the coveted Osamu Tezuka Award for new manga artists. He debuted in the Japanese **Weekly Shonen Jump** magazine in 1989 with the romantic comedy **Tende Shôwaru Cupid**. From 1990 to 1994 he wrote and drew the hit manga **YuYu Hakusho**, which was followed by the dark comedy science-fiction series **Level E** and finally this adventure series **Hunter x Hunter**. In 1999 he married the manga artist Naoko Takeuchi.

HUNTER X HUNTER Volume 2
The SHONEN JUMP ADVANCED Graphic Novel Edition

STORY AND ART BY
YOSHIHIRO TOGASHI

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RATED T+ FOR OLDER TEENS

PARENTAL ADVISORY
HUNTER X HUNTER is rated T+ for Older Teen. It contains realistic violence. It is recommended for ages 16 and up.

THE WORLD'S MOST CUTTING-EDGE MANGA
SHONEN JUMP ADVANCED
www.shonenjump.com

SHONEN JUMP ADVANCED GRAPHIC NOVEL

HUNTER × HUNTER™

ハンター × ハンター

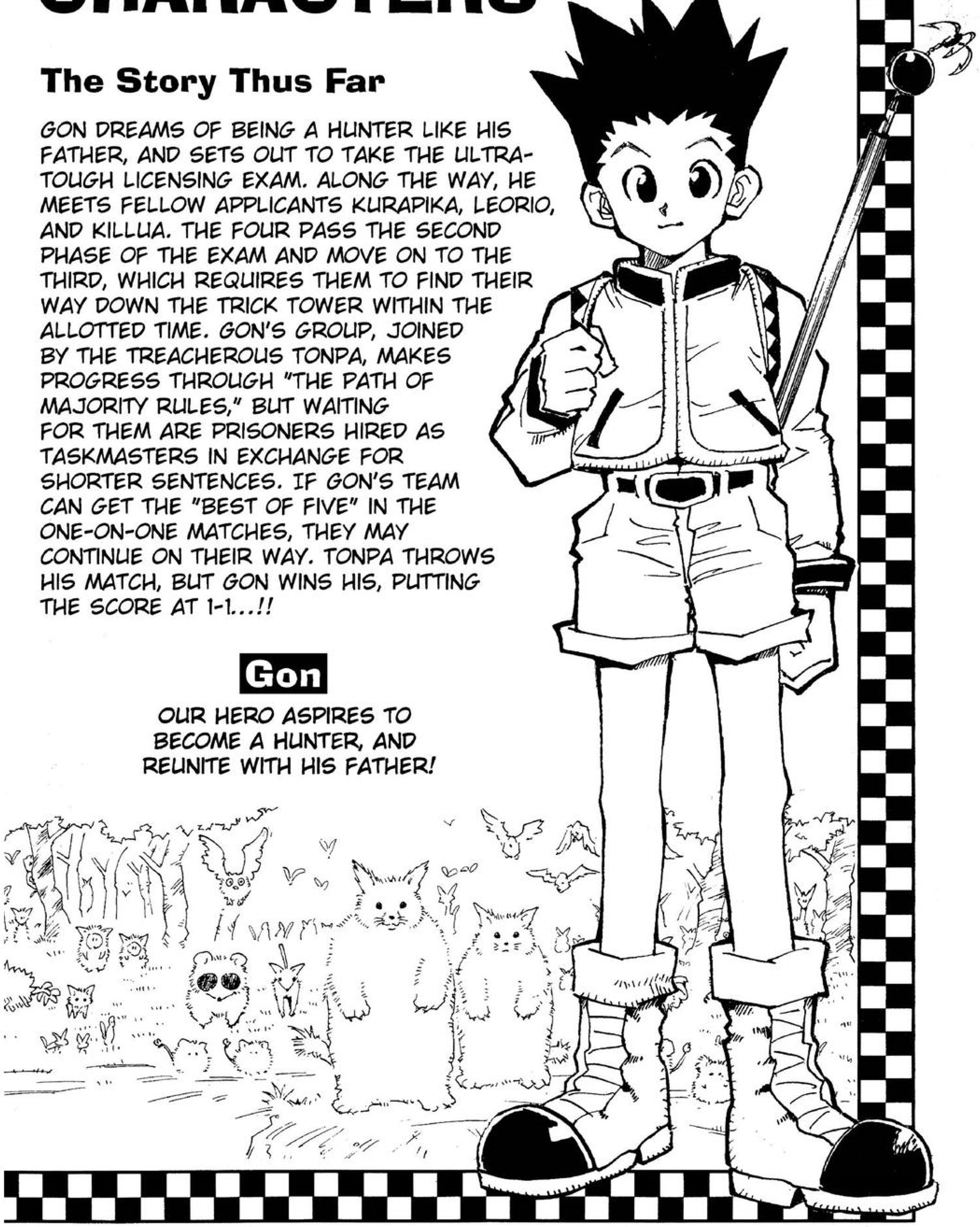
Story & Art by
Yoshihiro Togashi

Volume 2

CHARACTERS

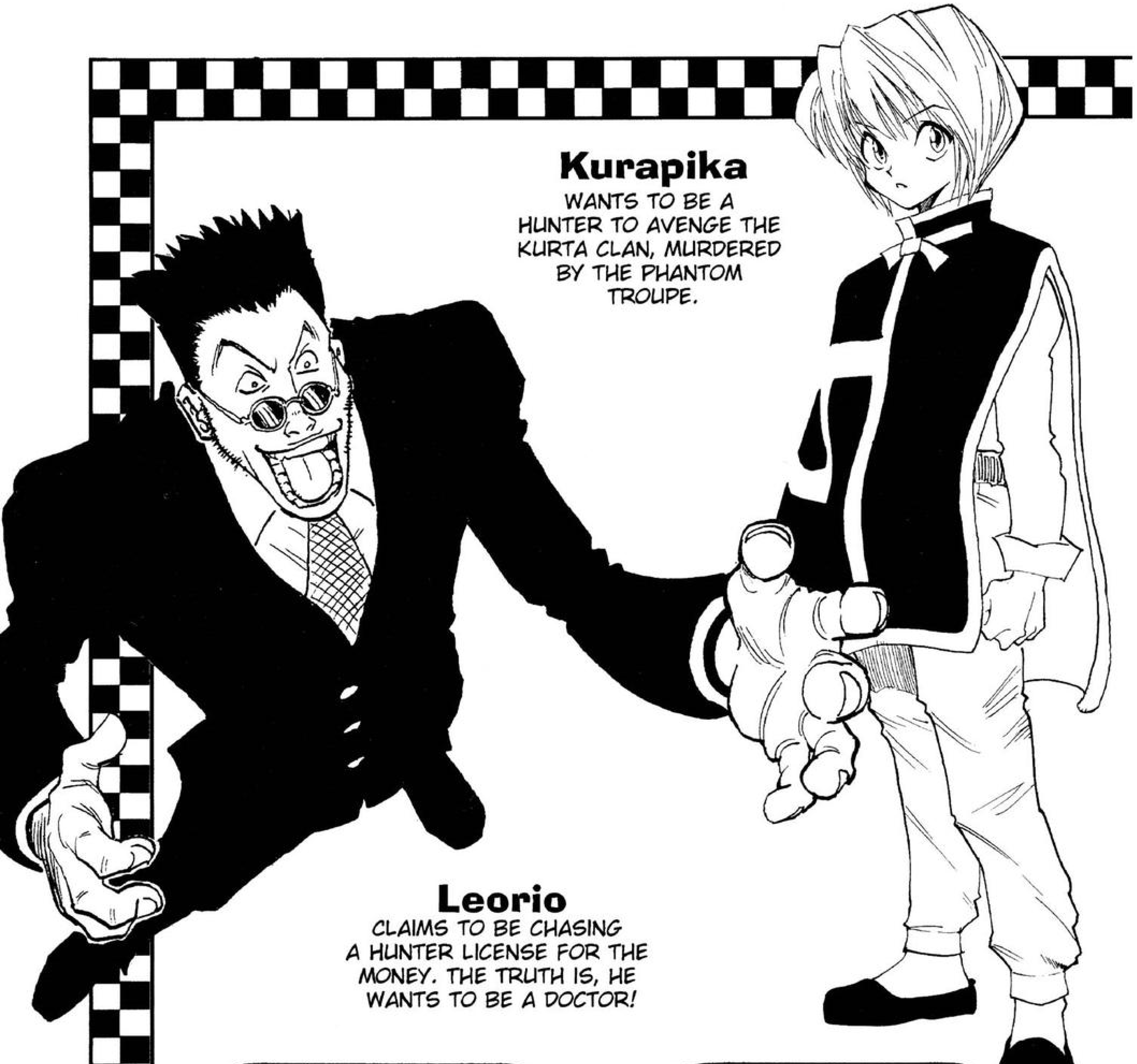
The Story Thus Far

GON DREAMS OF BEING A HUNTER LIKE HIS FATHER, AND SETS OUT TO TAKE THE ULTRA-TOUGH LICENSING EXAM. ALONG THE WAY, HE MEETS FELLOW APPLICANTS KURAPIKA, LEORIO, AND KILLUA. THE FOUR PASS THE SECOND PHASE OF THE EXAM AND MOVE ON TO THE THIRD, WHICH REQUIRES THEM TO FIND THEIR WAY DOWN THE TRICK TOWER WITHIN THE ALLOTTED TIME. GON'S GROUP, JOINED BY THE TREACHEROUS TONPA, MAKES PROGRESS THROUGH "THE PATH OF MAJORITY RULES," BUT WAITING FOR THEM ARE PRISONERS HIRED AS TASKMASTERS IN EXCHANGE FOR SHORTER SENTENCES. IF GON'S TEAM CAN GET THE "BEST OF FIVE" IN THE ONE-ON-ONE MATCHES, THEY MAY CONTINUE ON THEIR WAY. TONPA THROWS HIS MATCH, BUT GON WINS HIS, PUTTING THE SCORE AT 1-1...!!



Gon

OUR HERO ASPIRES TO BECOME A HUNTER, AND REUNITE WITH HIS FATHER!

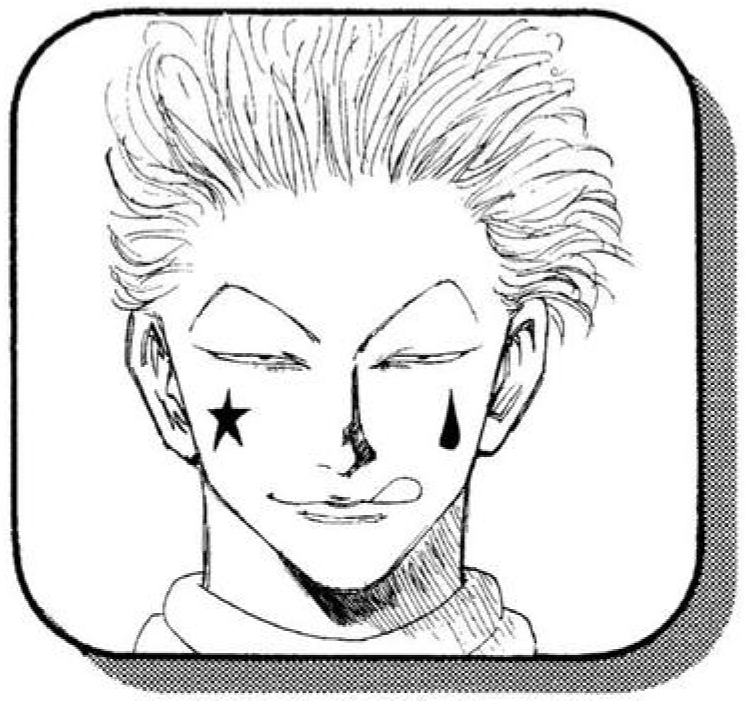


Kurapika

WANTS TO BE A HUNTER TO AVENGE THE KURTA CLAN, MURDERED BY THE PHANTOM TROUPE.

Leorio

CLAIMS TO BE CHASING A HUNTER LICENSE FOR THE MONEY. THE TRUTH IS, HE WANTS TO BE A DOCTOR!



Hisoka

A SINISTER MAGICIAN, WHO DEALS DEATH FROM A DECK OF PLAYING CARDS! NO EXAMINEE IS SAFE FROM HIS BLOODLUST!

Tonpa

AN EXPERIENCED EXAM-TAKER WHO PRETENDS TO BE FRIENDLY, BUT ONLY TO INDULGE HIS HOBBY-CRUSHING NEWBIES.

HUNTER × HUNTER™

Volume 2

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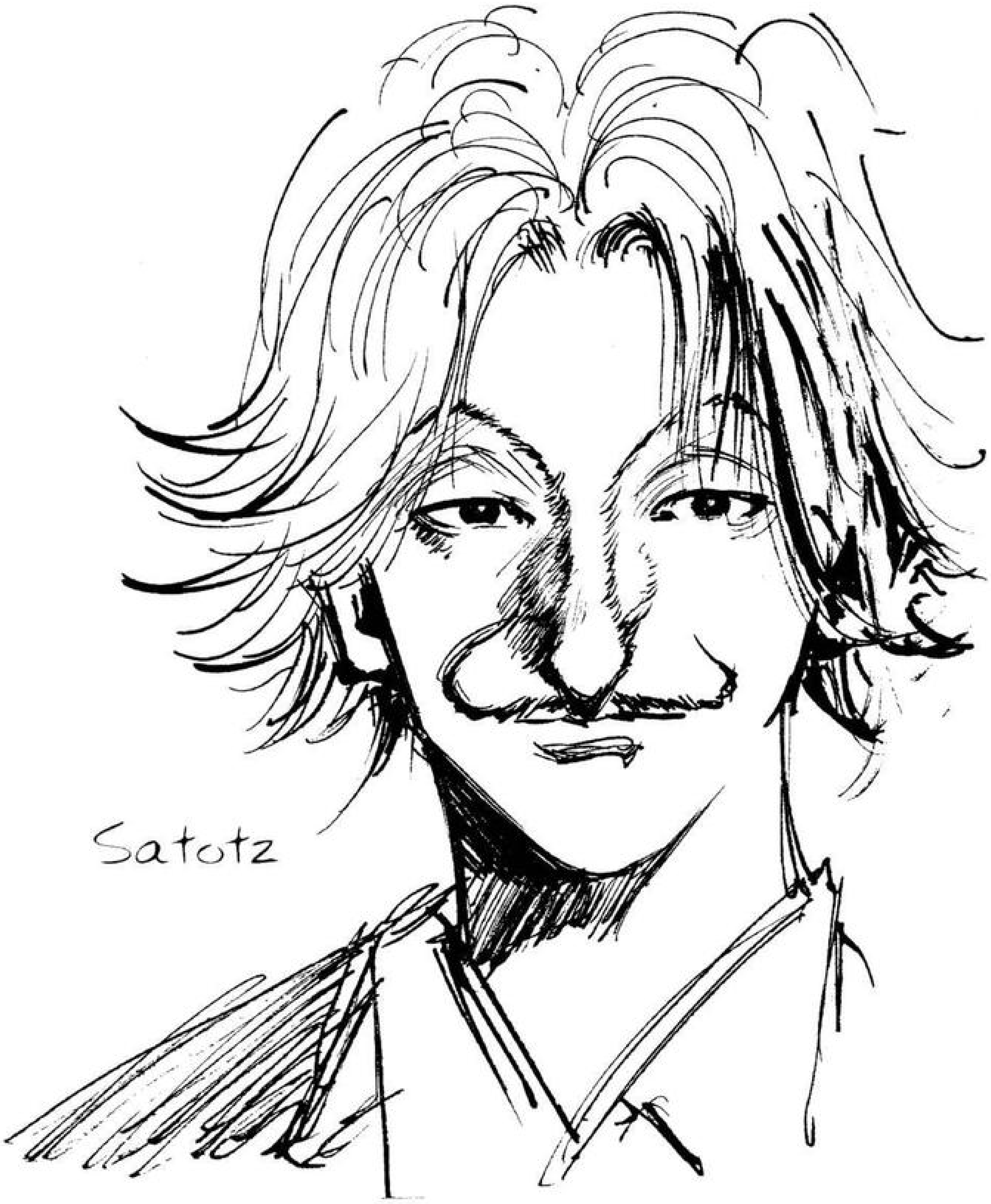
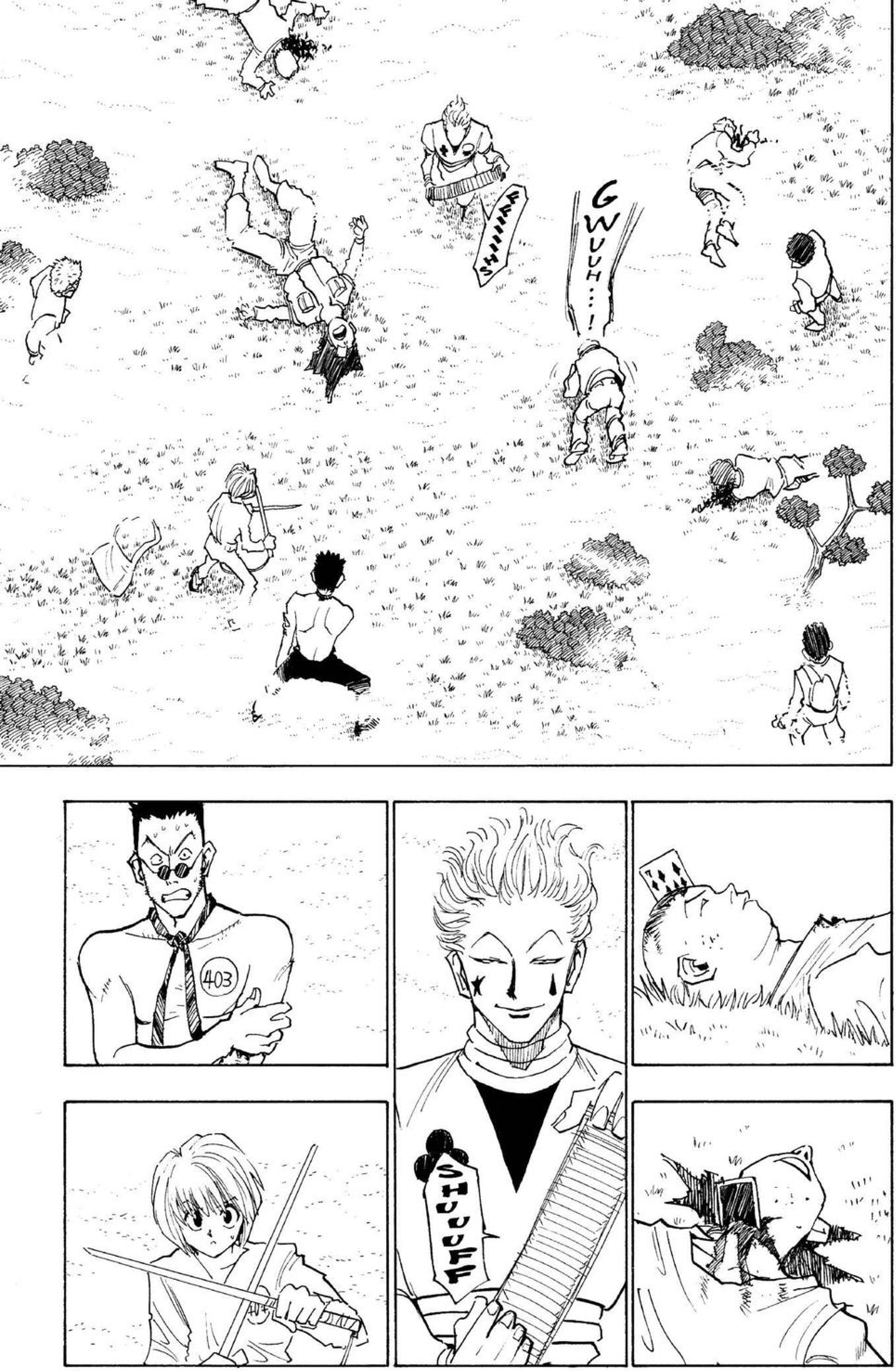
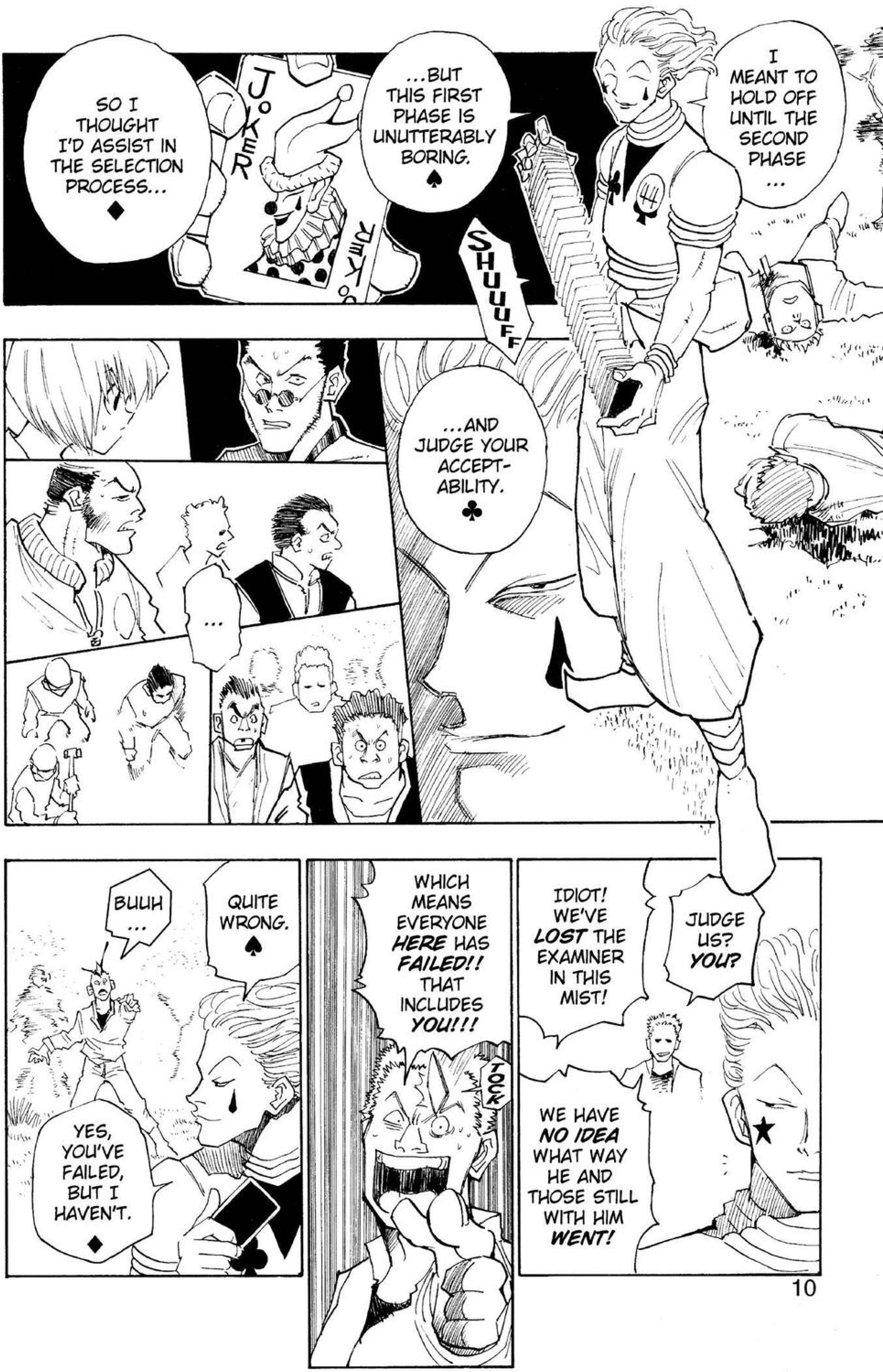
Chapter 9

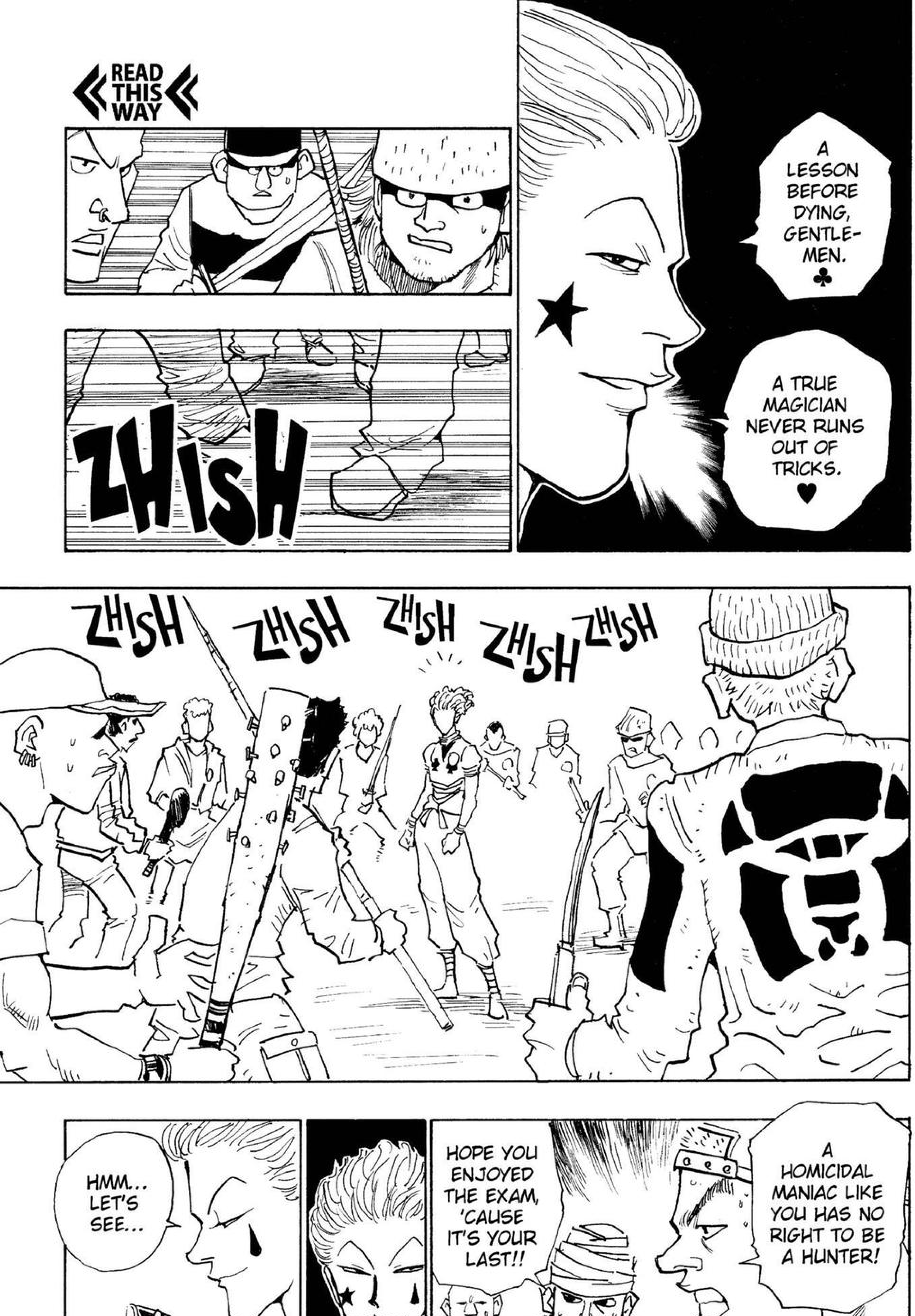
A Struggle in the Mist

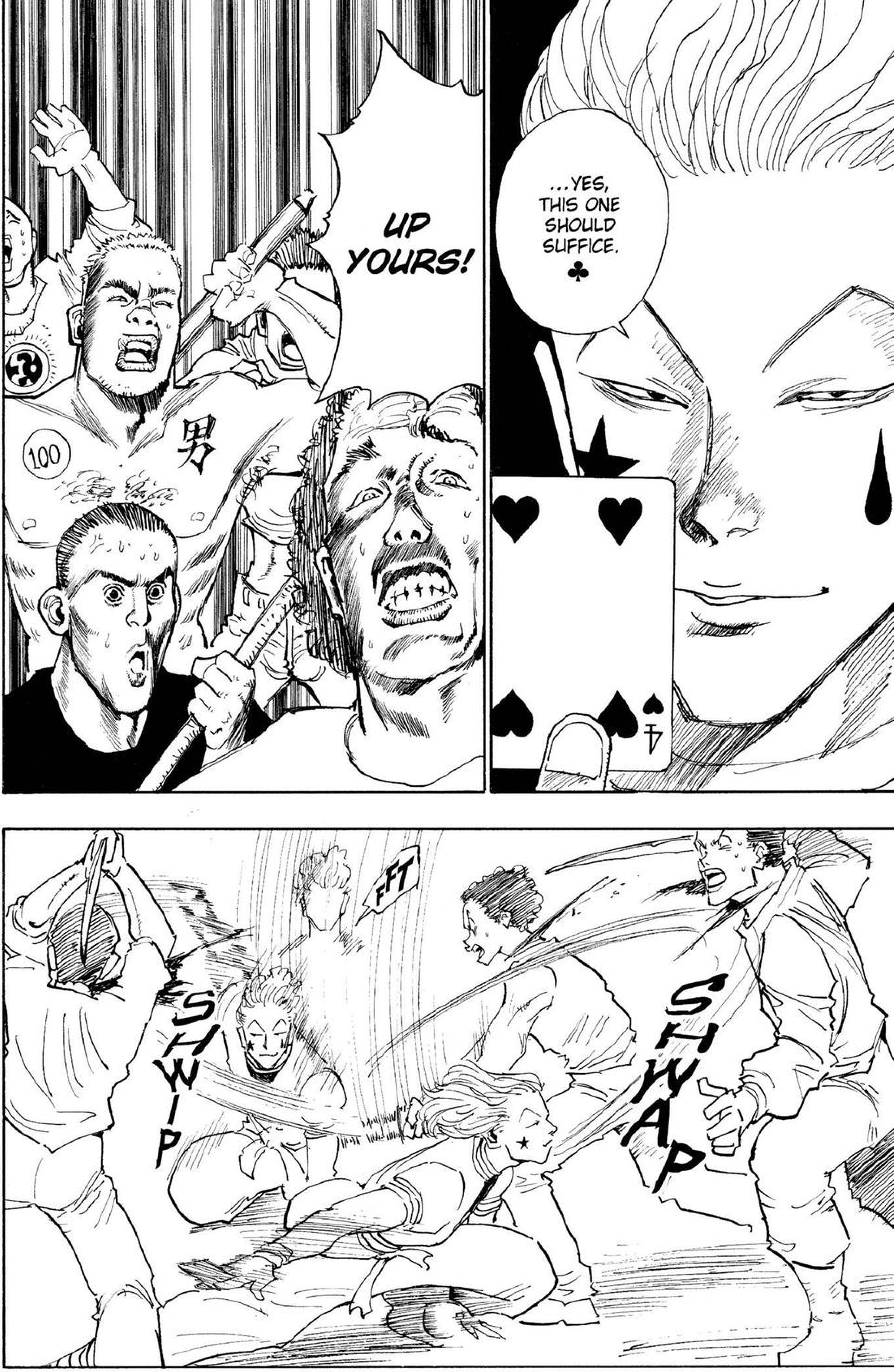

Satotz


GWUUH...!
SHIIIFF
SHUUUFF
403

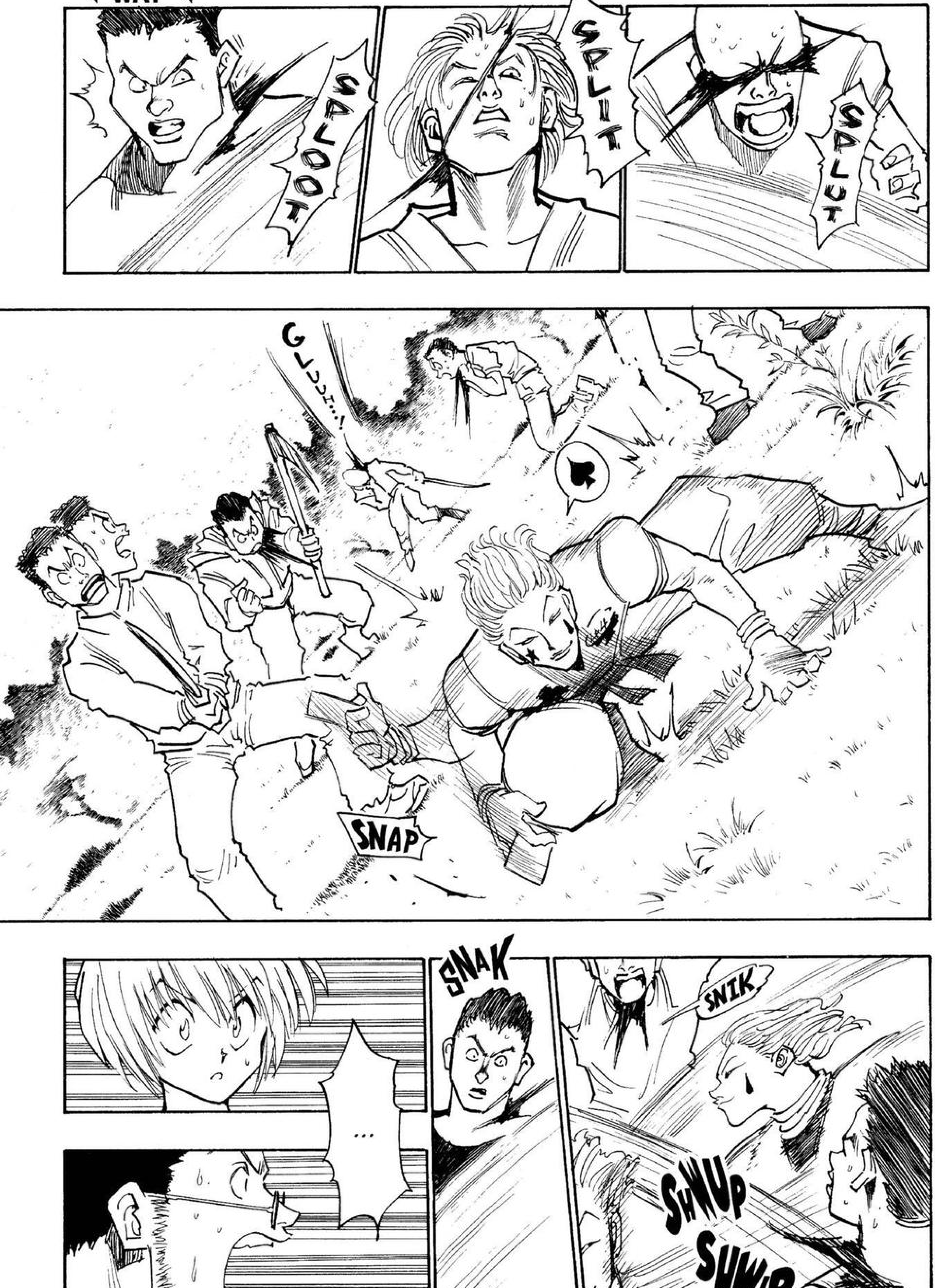

I MEANT TO HOLD OFF UNTIL THE SECOND PHASE ...
...BUT THIS FIRST PHASE IS UNUTTERABLY BORING. ♠
JOKER
SO I THOUGHT I'D ASSIST IN THE SELECTION PROCESS... ◆
SHUUUUFF
...AND JUDGE YOUR ACCEPT-ABILITY. ♣
...
JUDGE US? *YOU?*
IDIOT! WE'VE *LOST* THE EXAMINER IN THIS MIST!
WE HAVE *NO IDEA* WHAT WAY HE AND THOSE STILL WITH HIM *WENT!*
WHICH MEANS EVERYONE *HERE* HAS *FAILED!!* THAT INCLUDES *YOU!!!*
TOCK
QUITE WRONG. ♠
BUUH ...
YES, YOU'VE FAILED, BUT I HAVEN'T. ◆

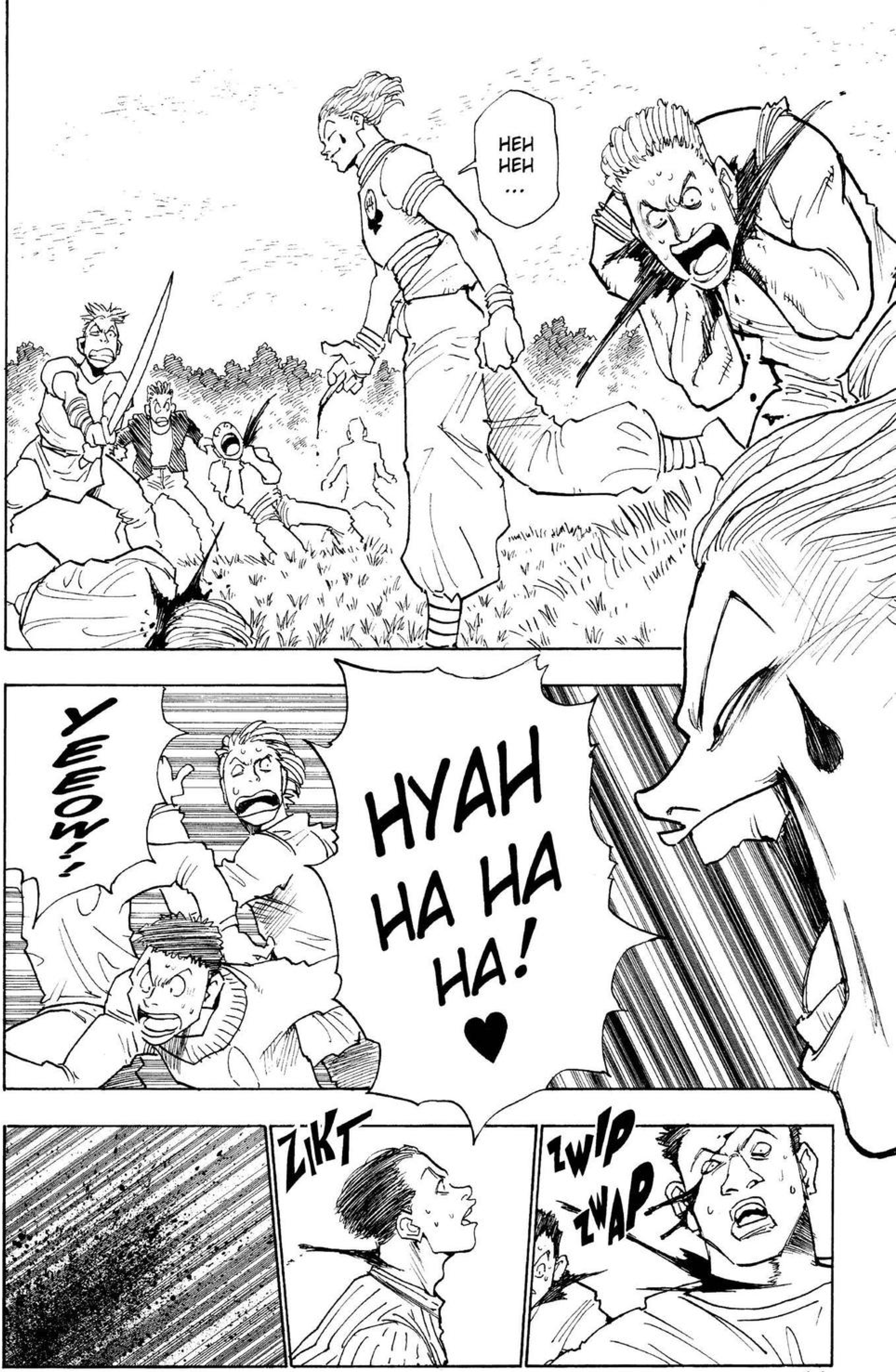
READ THIS WAY

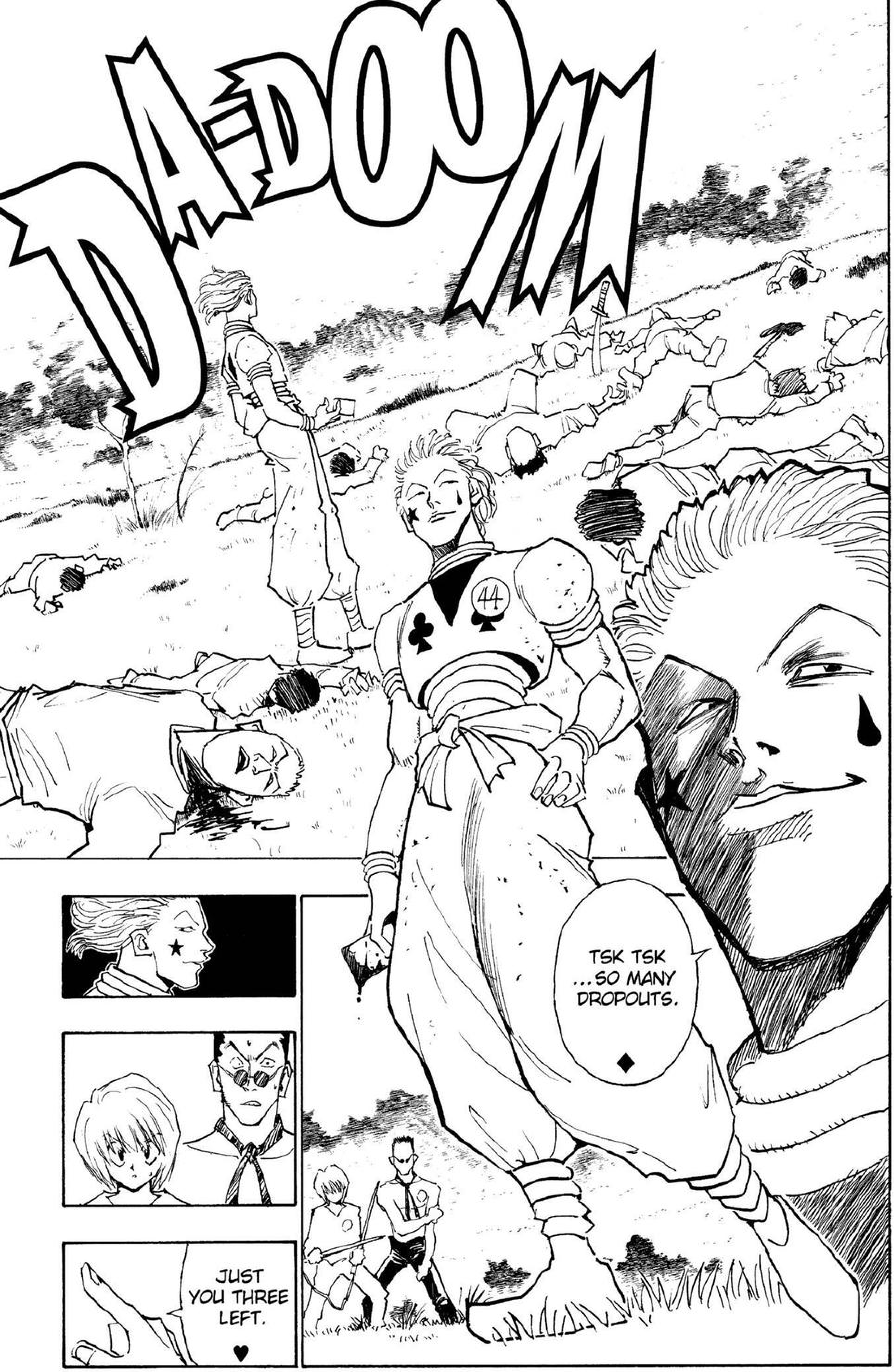

A LESSON BEFORE DYING, GENTLEMEN. ♣
A TRUE MAGICIAN NEVER RUNS OUT OF TRICKS. ♥
ZHISH
ZHISH
ZHISH
ZHISH
ZHISH
ZHISH
A HOMICIDAL MANIAC LIKE YOU HAS NO RIGHT TO BE A HUNTER!
HOPE YOU ENJOYED THE EXAM, 'CAUSE IT'S YOUR LAST!!
HMM... LET'S SEE...

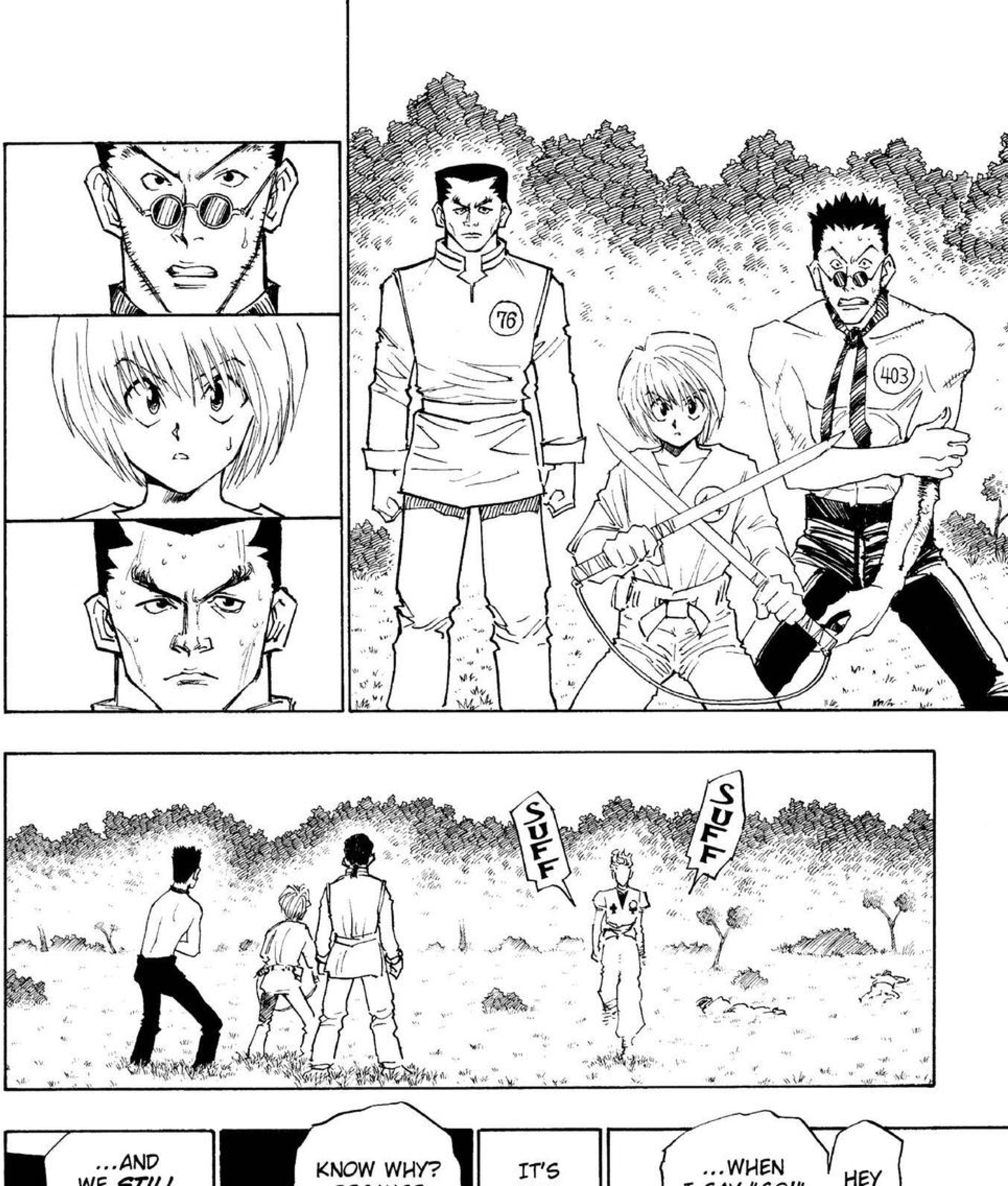

...YES, THIS ONE SHOULD SUFFICE. ♣
UP YOURS!
男
100
SHWAP
F-FT
SHWIP

READ THIS WAY

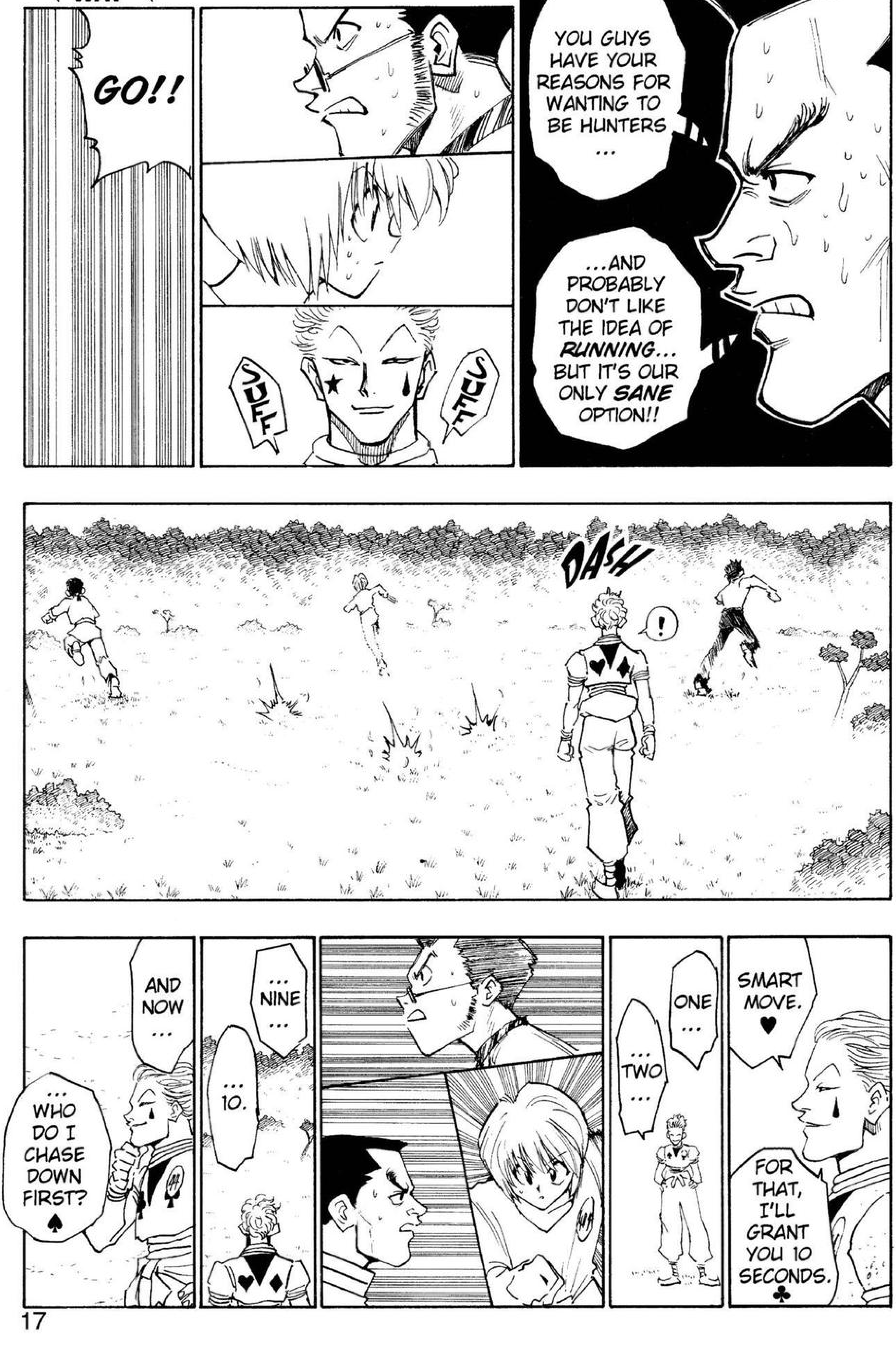

SPLUT
SPLIT
SPLOOT
♠
GLUUU...!
SNAP
SNIK
SHWUP
SHWIP
SNAK
...

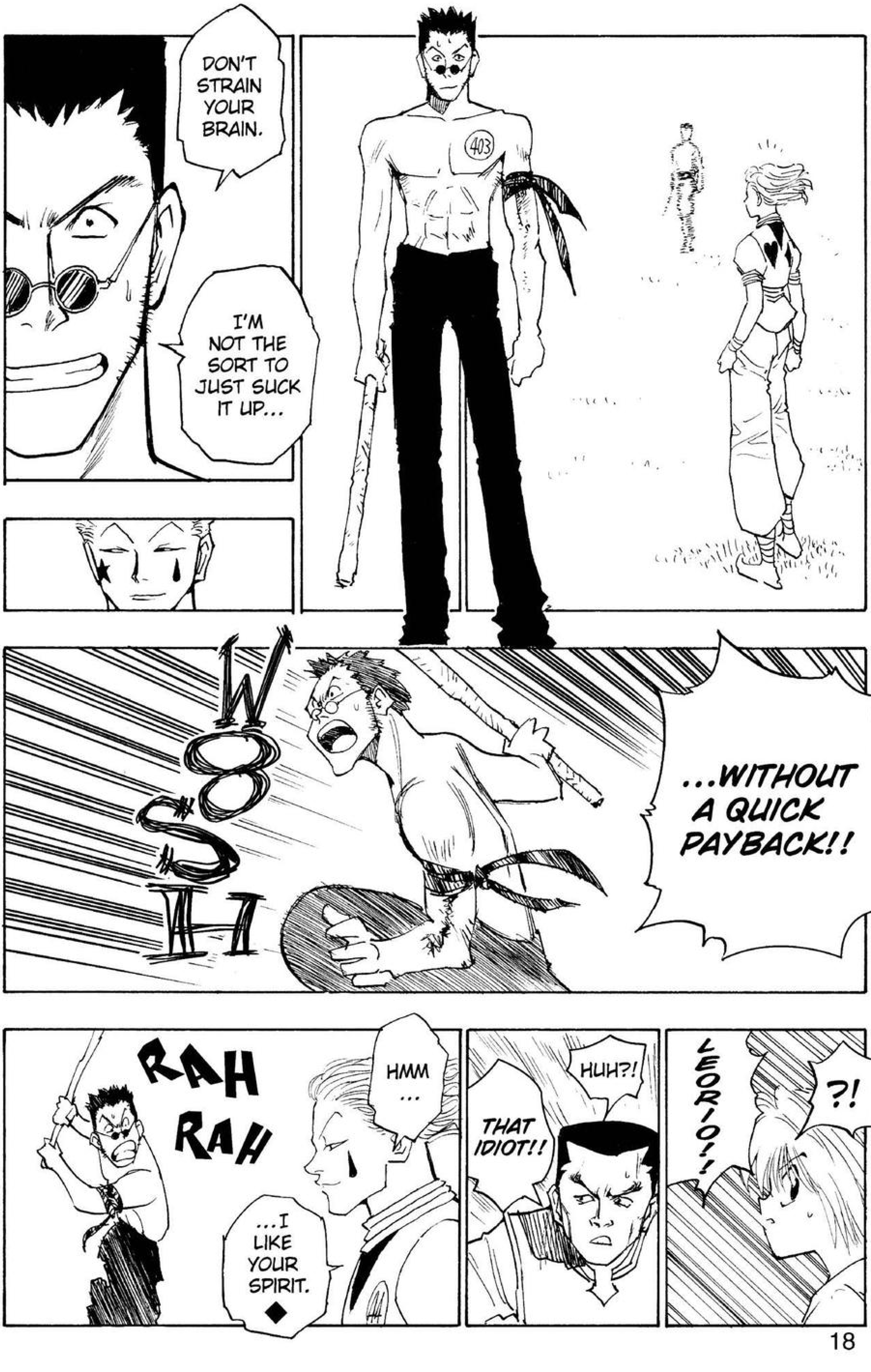

HEH HEH ...
HYAH HA HA HA HA! ♥
YEEEOW!!
ZWIP ZWAP
ZIKT


DA-DOOM
TSK TSK ...SO MANY DROPOUTS. ◆
JUST YOU THREE LEFT. ♥

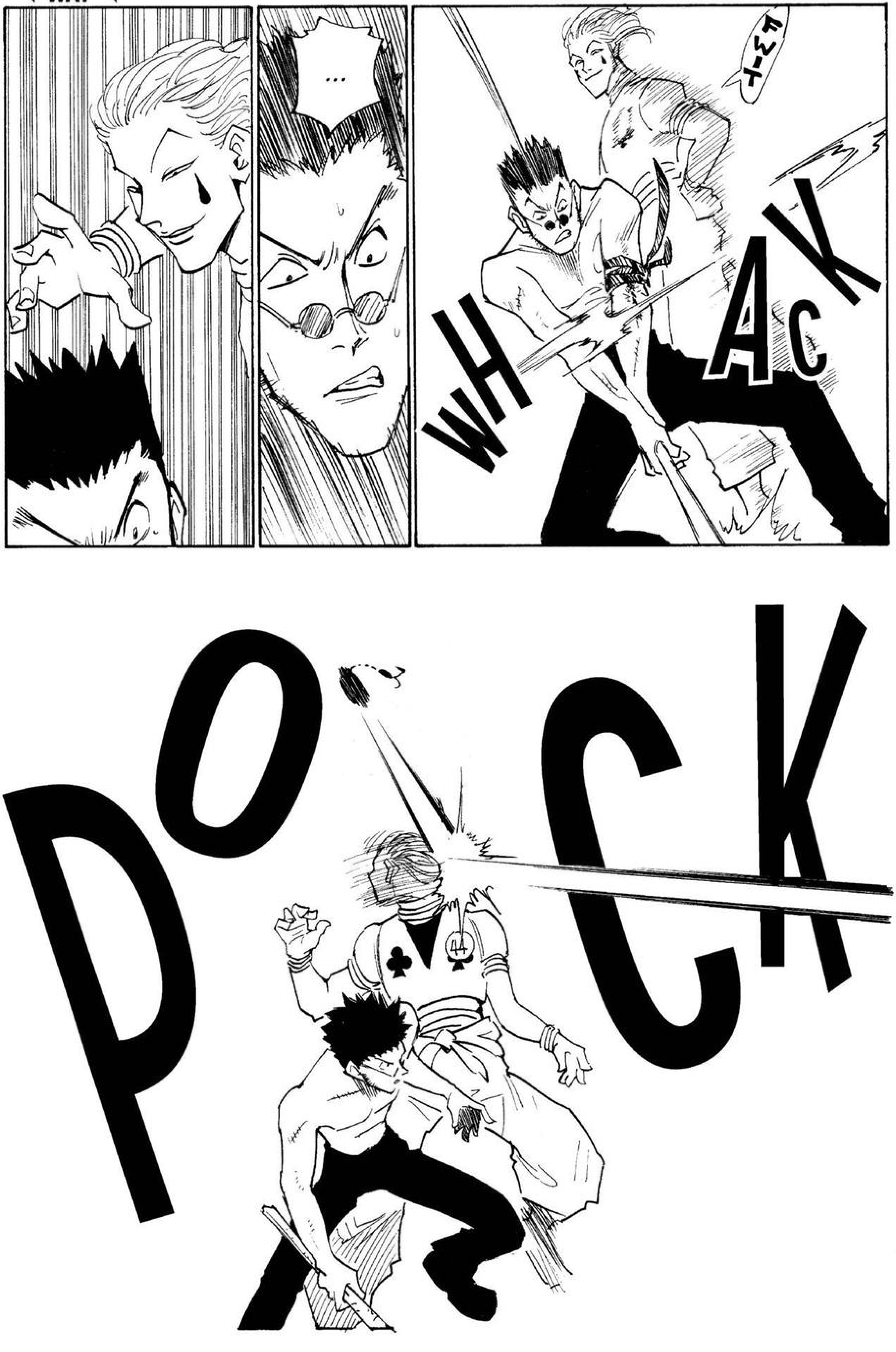

SUFF
SUFF
HEY ...
...WHEN I SAY "GO!" WE SPLIT UP! GOT IT?
IT'S OUR ***ONLY HOPE!***
KNOW WHY? BECAUSE HE IS A HOMICIDAL MANIAC!
AN ENTIRE ***ARMY*** COULD BE BACKING US UP...
...AND WE ***STILL*** WOULDN'T HAVE A ***CHANCE*** AGAINST HIM!

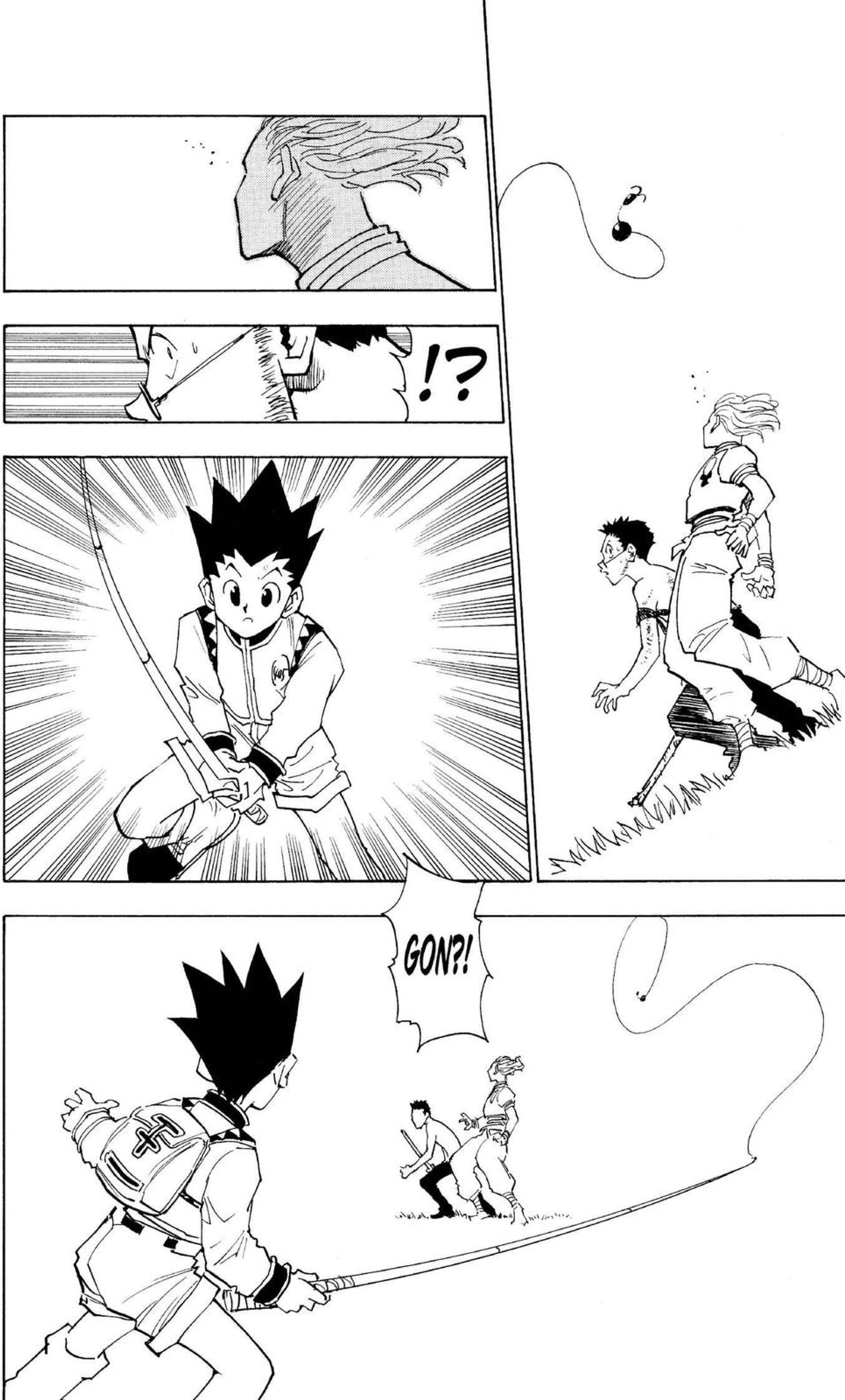
READ THIS WAY


YOU GUYS HAVE YOUR REASONS FOR WANTING TO BE HUNTERS ...
...AND PROBABLY DON'T LIKE THE IDEA OF RUNNING... BUT IT'S OUR ONLY SANE OPTION!!
SUFF
SUFF
GO!!
DASH
!
SMART MOVE. ♥
FOR THAT, I'LL GRANT YOU 10 SECONDS. ♣
ONE ...
... TWO ...
... NINE ...
... 10.
AND NOW ...
... WHO DO I CHASE DOWN FIRST? ♠

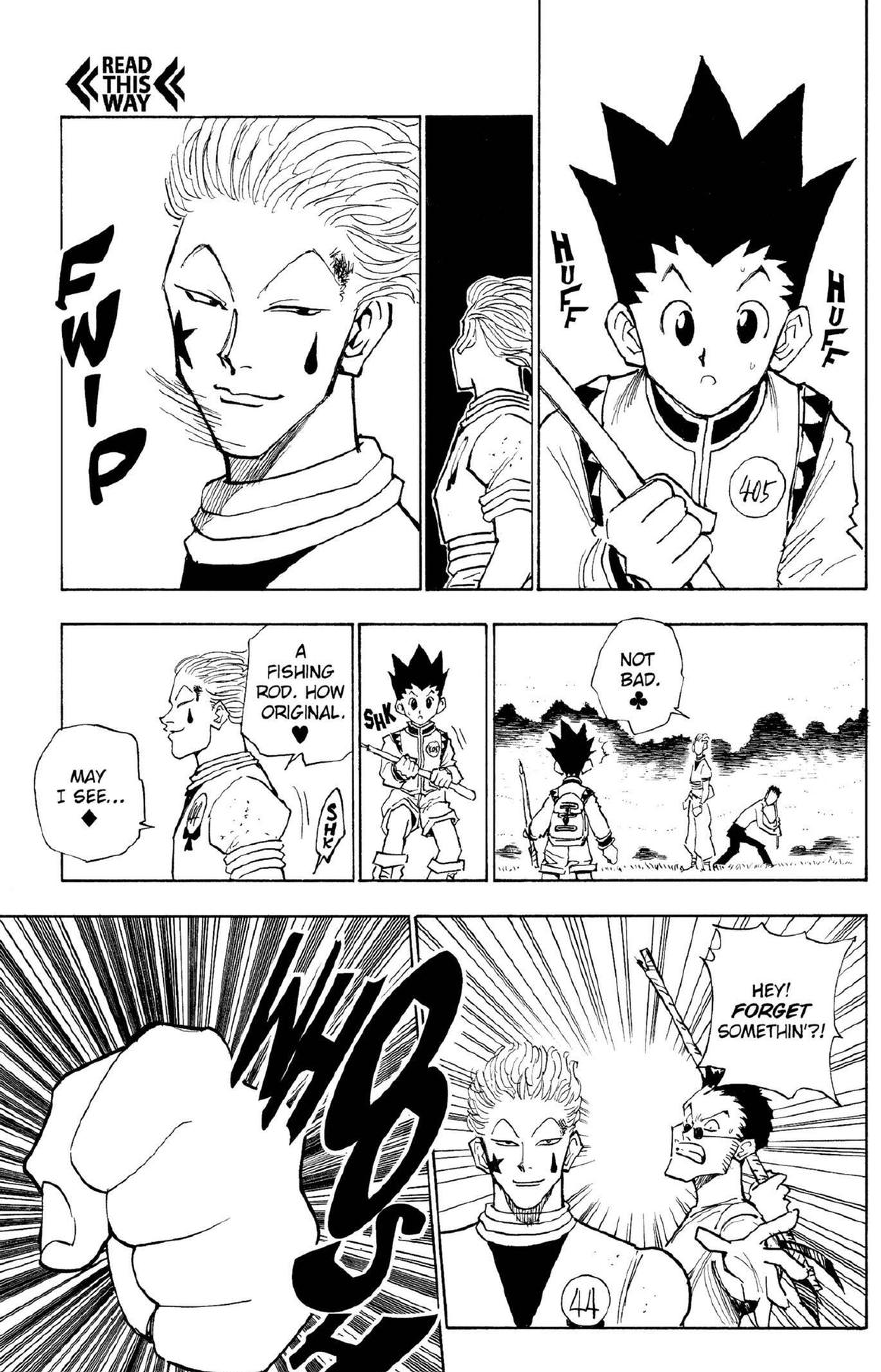

DON'T STRAIN YOUR BRAIN.
I'M NOT THE SORT TO JUST SUCK IT UP...
403
WOOSH
...WITHOUT A QUICK PAYBACK!!
RAH RAH
HMM ...
...I LIKE YOUR SPIRIT. ◆
HUH?!
THAT IDIOT!!
LEORIO!!
?!

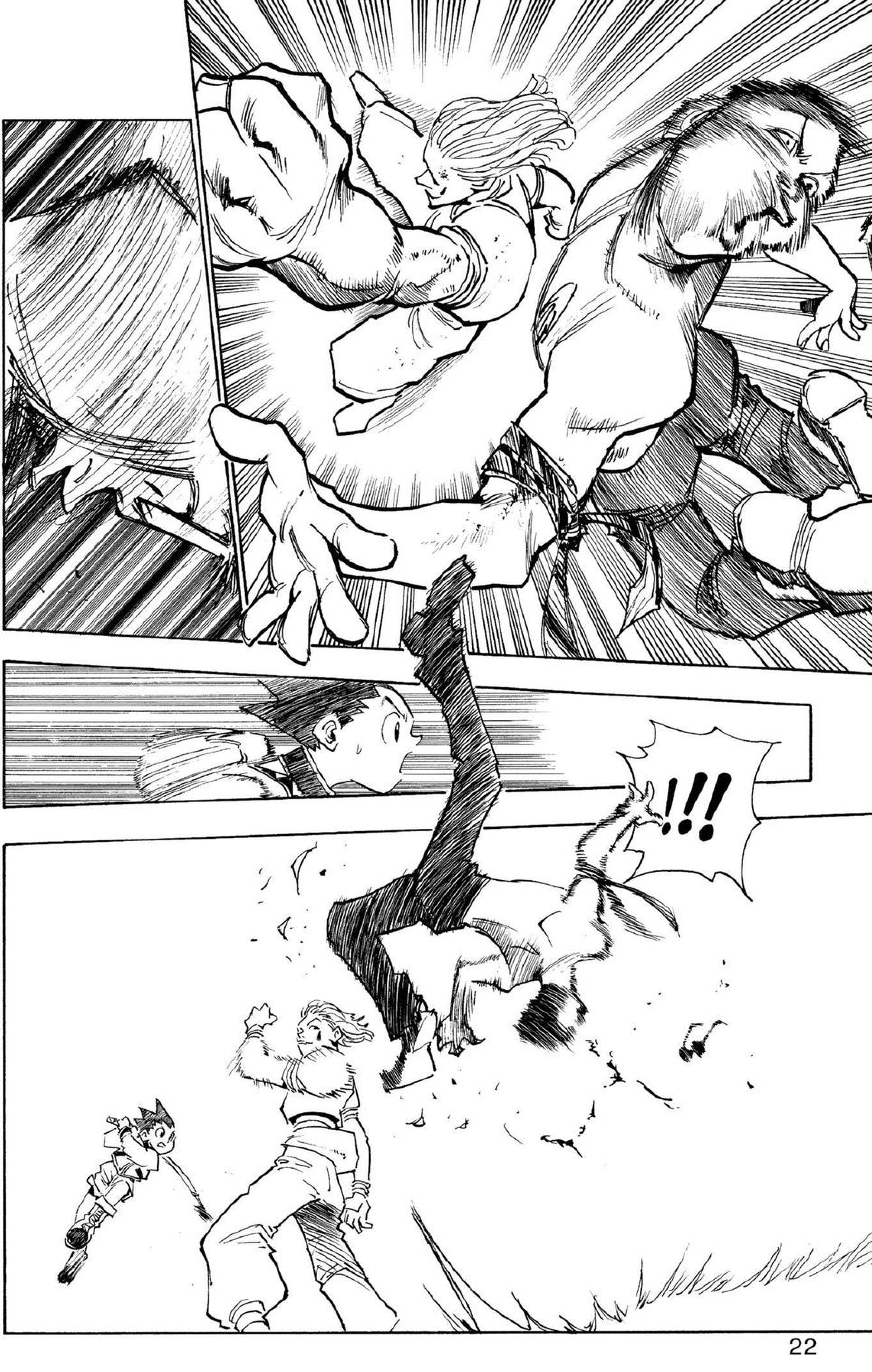
READ THIS WAY

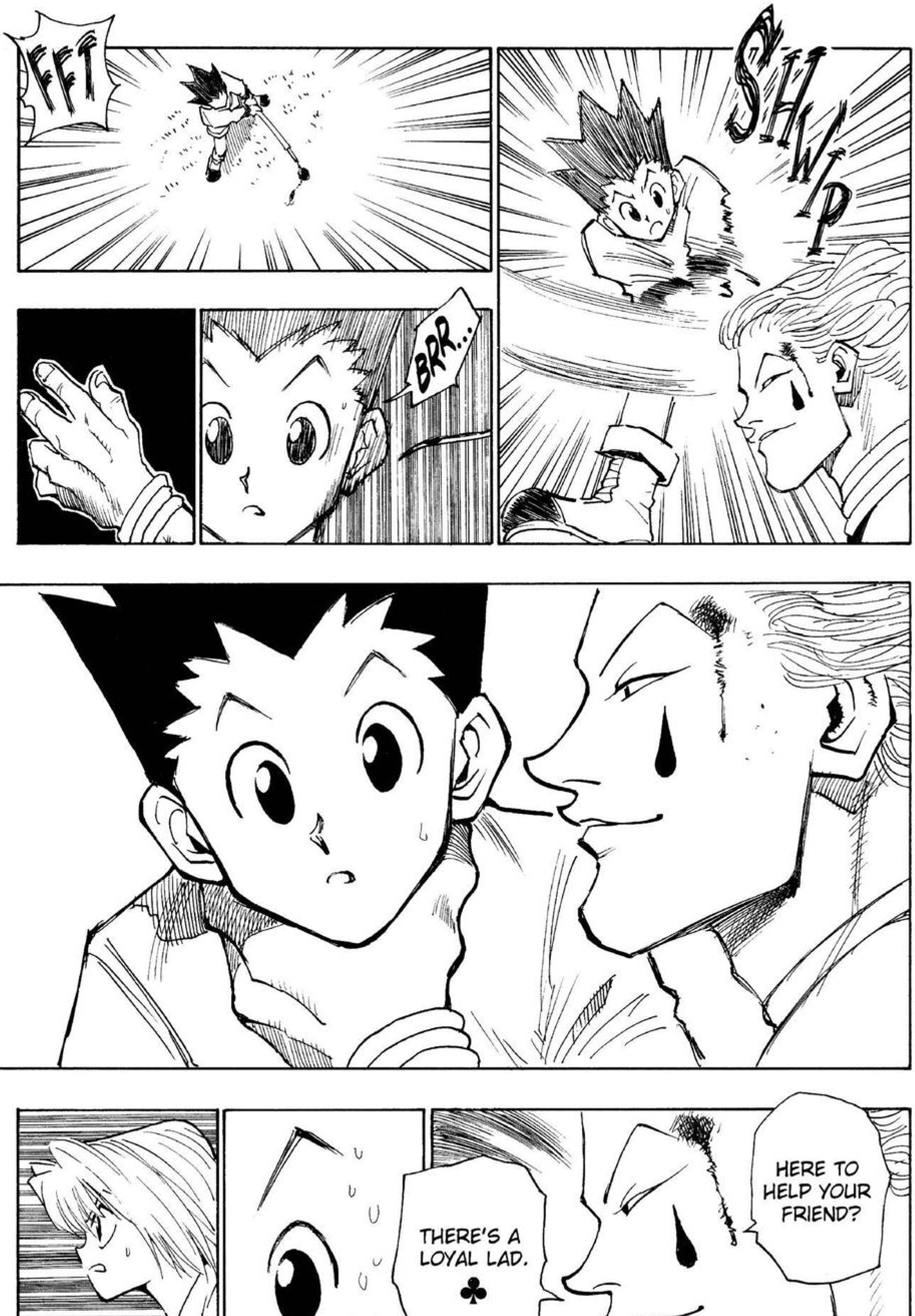

TWIT
WHACK
...
POCK

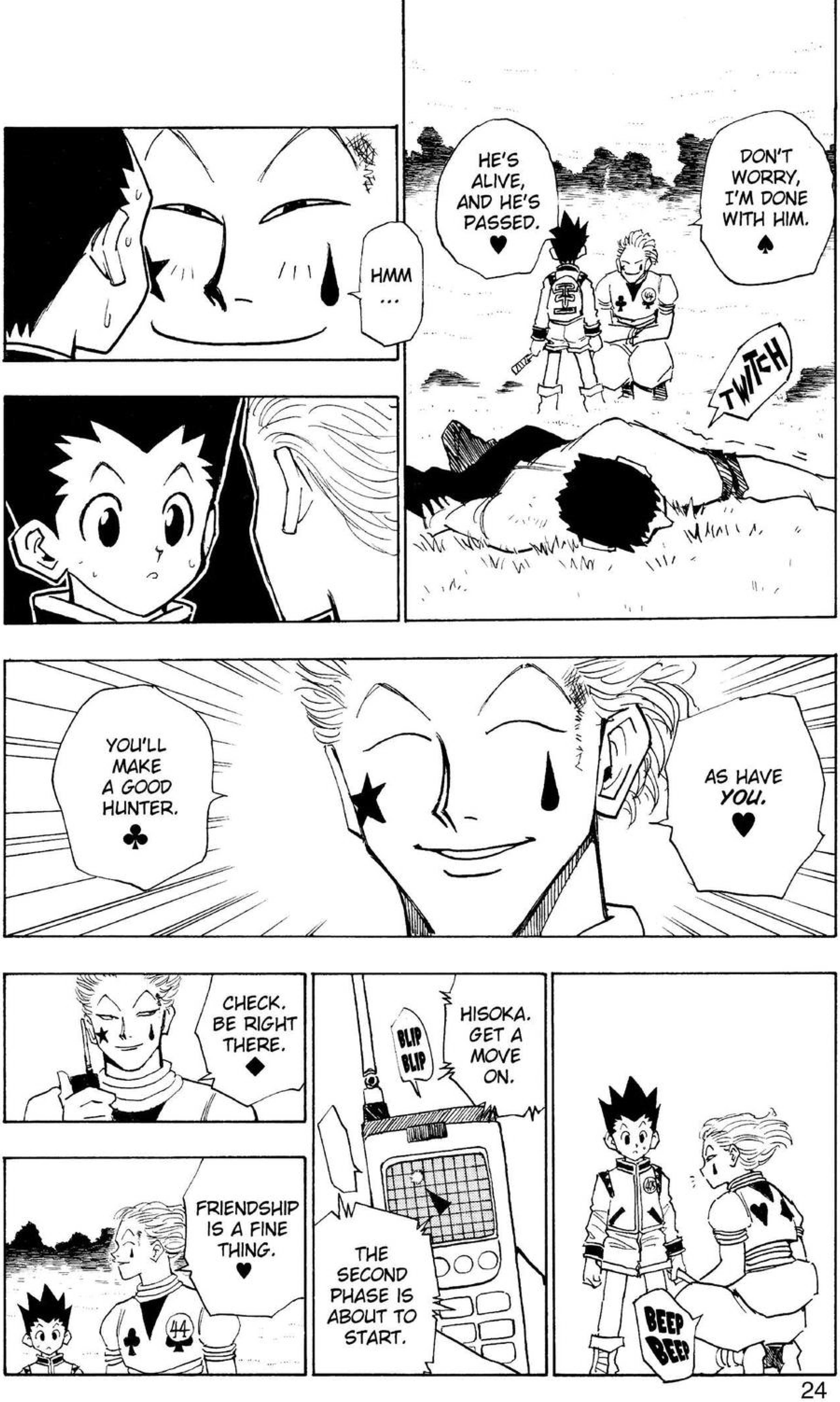

!?
GON?!

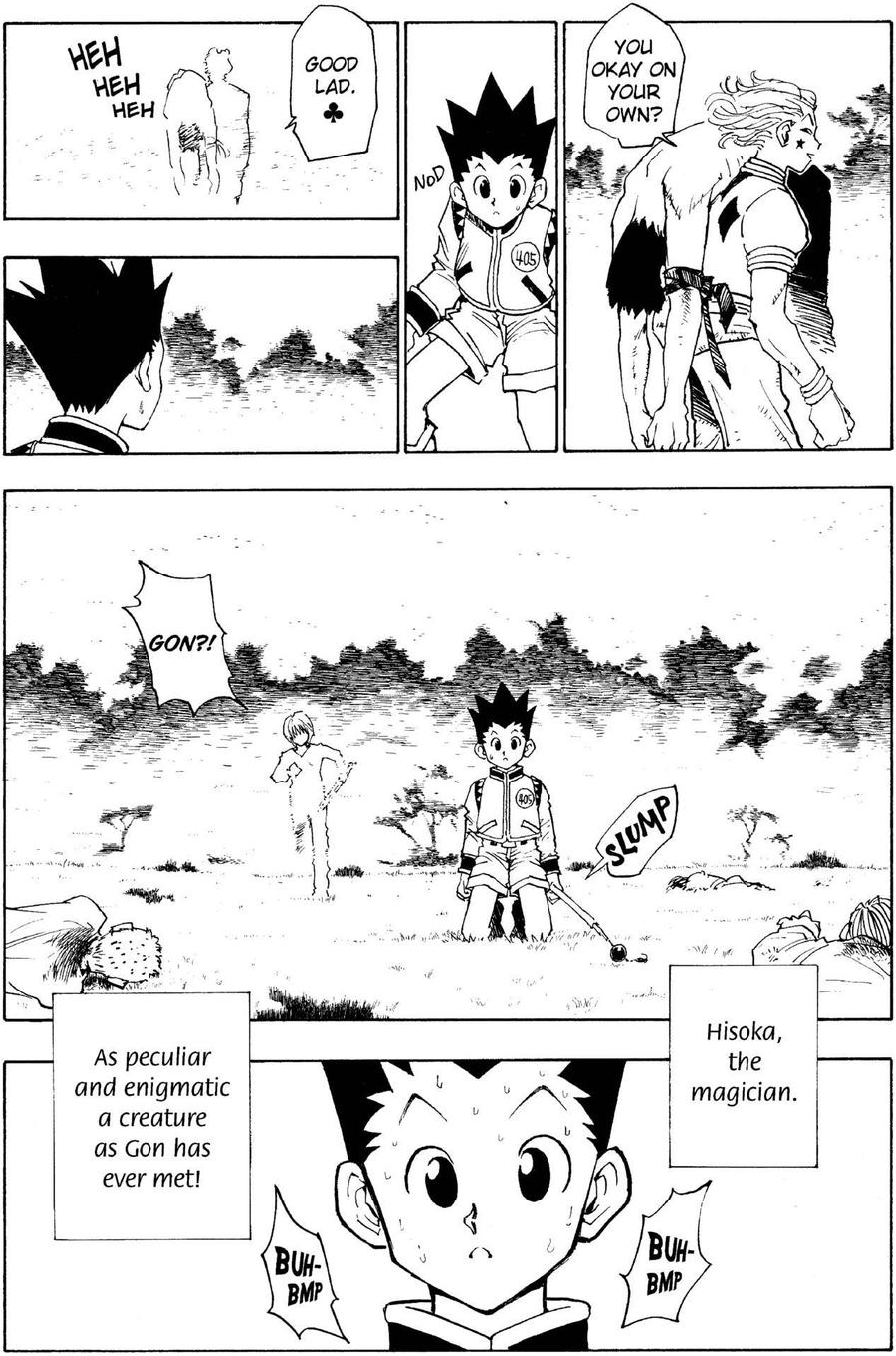
READ THIS WAY

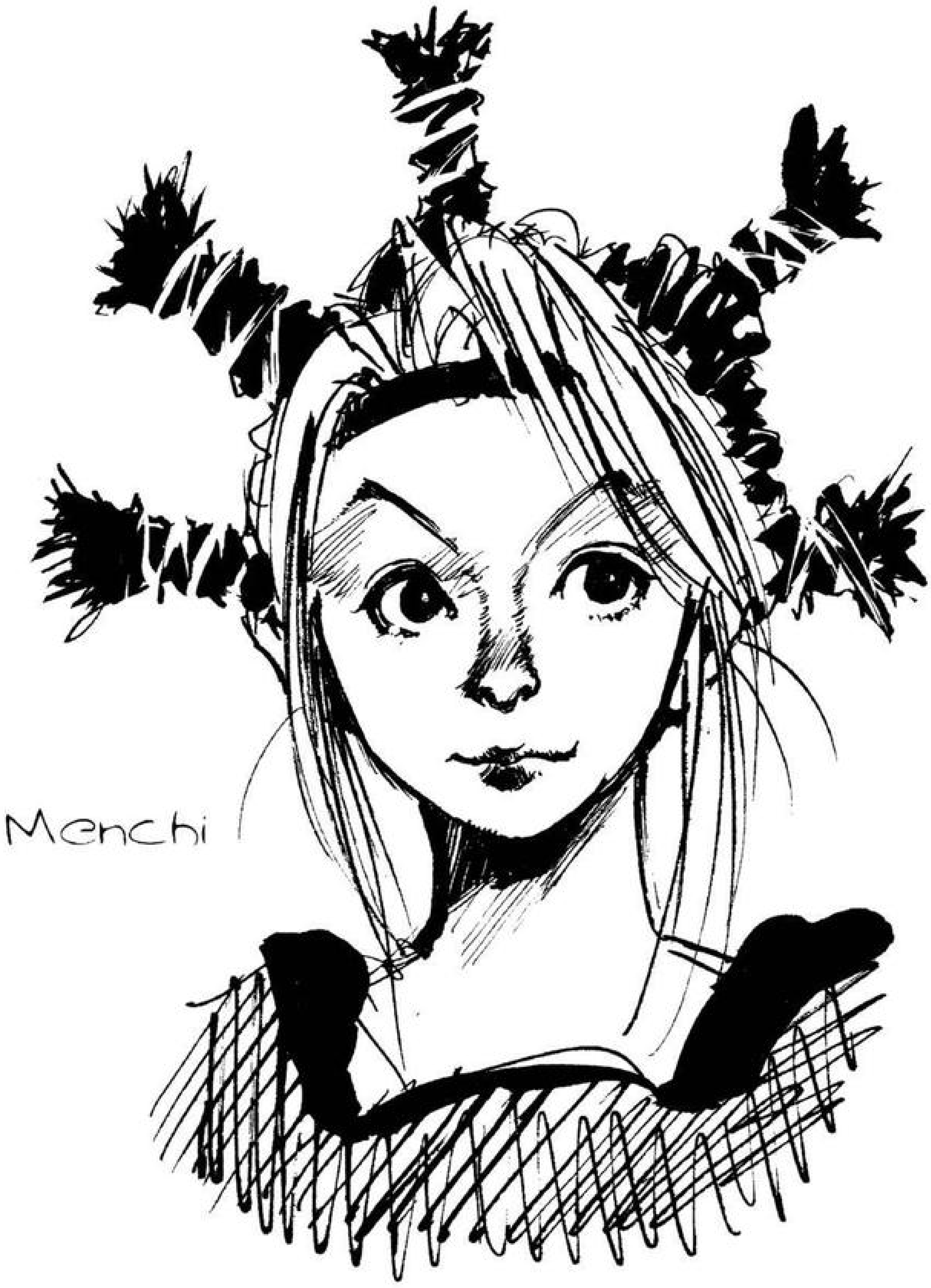

HUFF
HUFF
405
FWIP
NOT BAD. ♣
SHK
SHK
A FISHING ROD. HOW ORIGINAL. ♥
MAY I SEE... ♦
HEY! **FORGET** SOMETHIN'?!
44
WHOOSH




FFT
BRR...
SHWIP
HERE TO HELP YOUR FRIEND?
THERE'S A LOYAL LAD. ♣

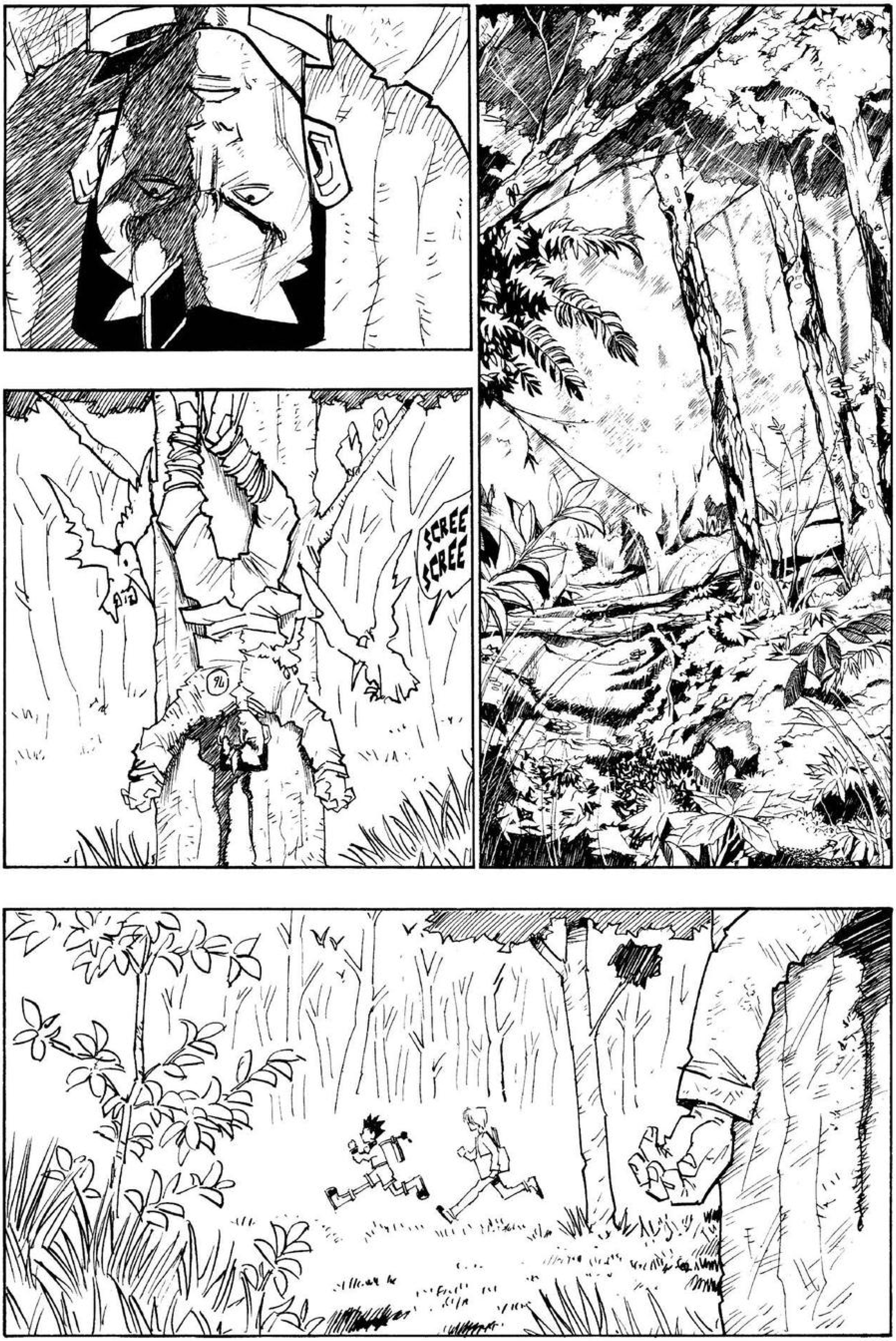

DON'T WORRY, I'M DONE WITH HIM. ♠
HE'S ALIVE, AND HE'S PASSED. ♥
TWITCH
HMM …
AS HAVE *YOU.* ♥
YOU'LL MAKE A GOOD HUNTER. ♣
BEEP BEEP
BLIP BLIP
HISOKA. GET A MOVE ON.
THE SECOND PHASE IS ABOUT TO START.
CHECK. BE RIGHT THERE. ◆
FRIENDSHIP IS A FINE THING. ♥


YOU OKAY ON YOUR OWN?
NOD
GOOD LAD. ♣
HEH HEH HEH
GON?!
SLUMP
Hisoka, the magician.
As peculiar and enigmatic a creature as Gon has ever met!
BUH-BMP
BUH-BMP

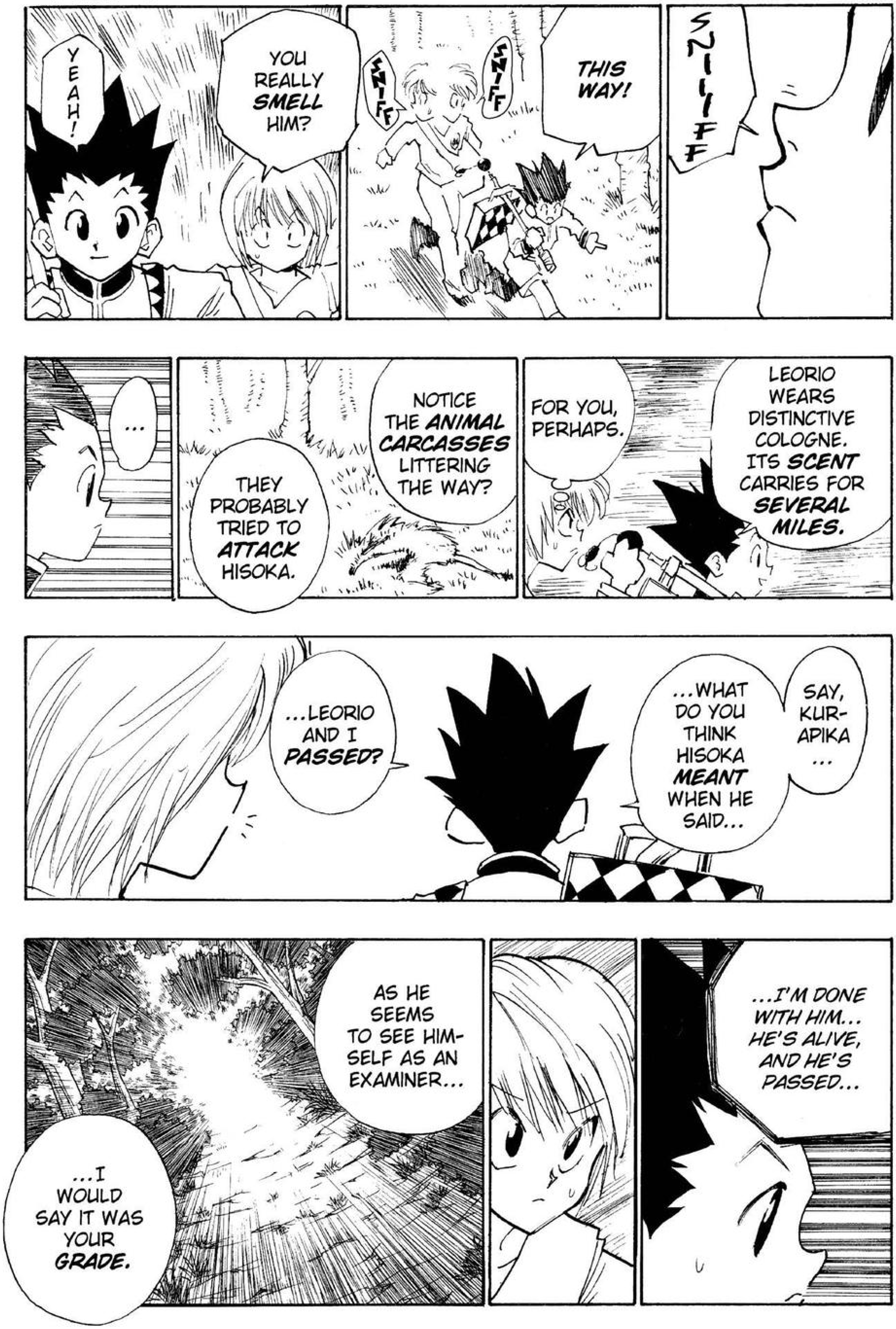

Menchi

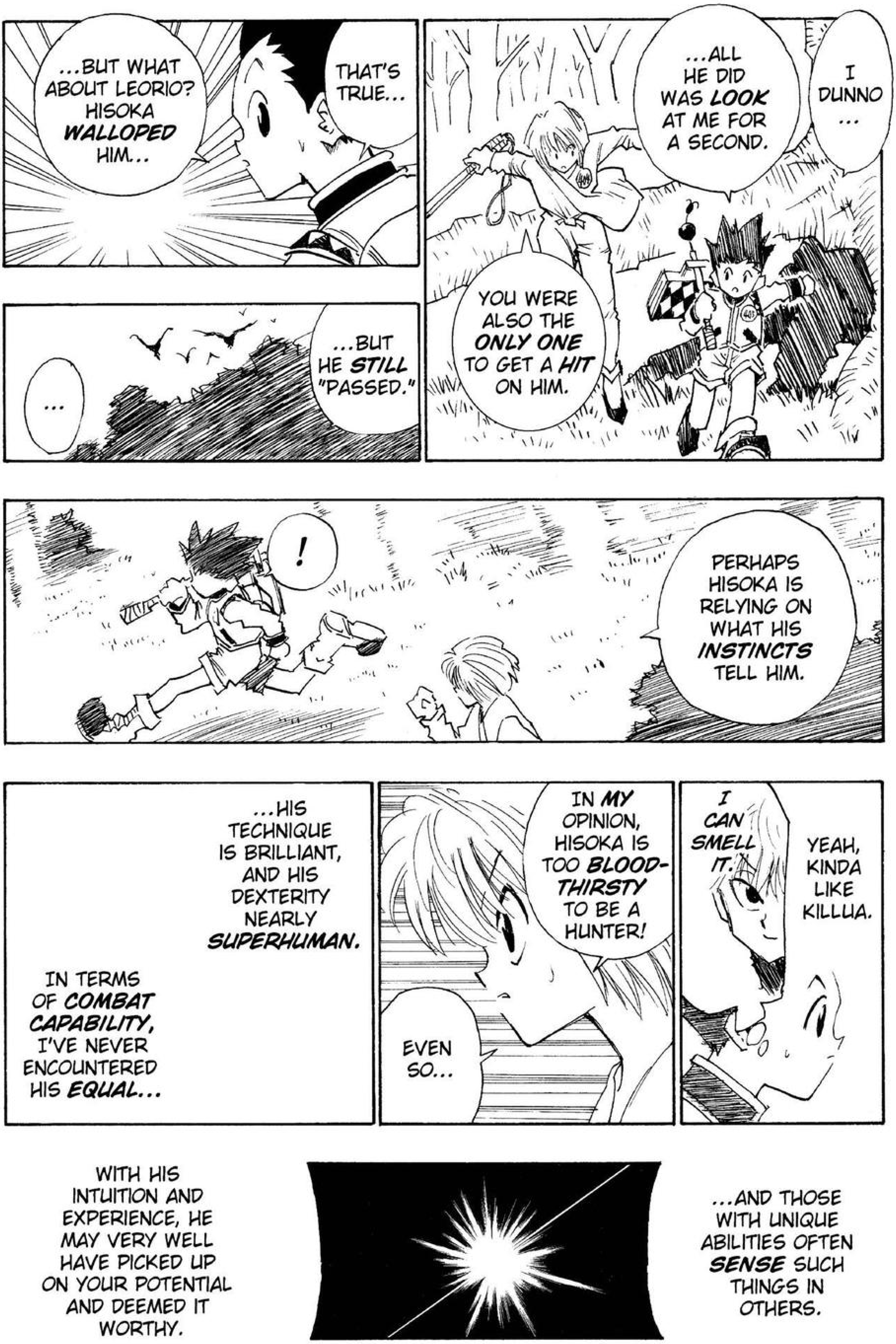
Chapter 10

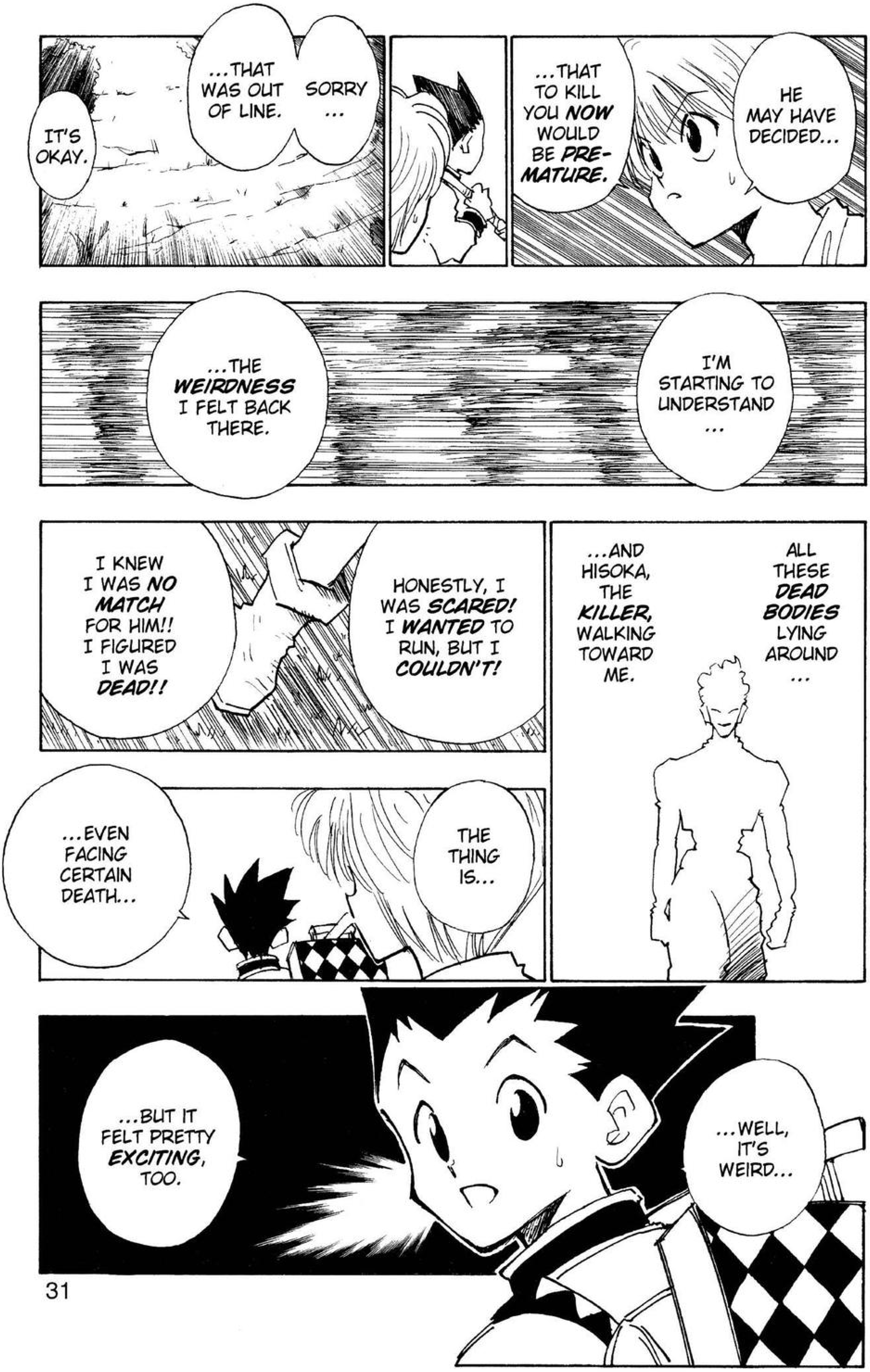
An Unexpected Task

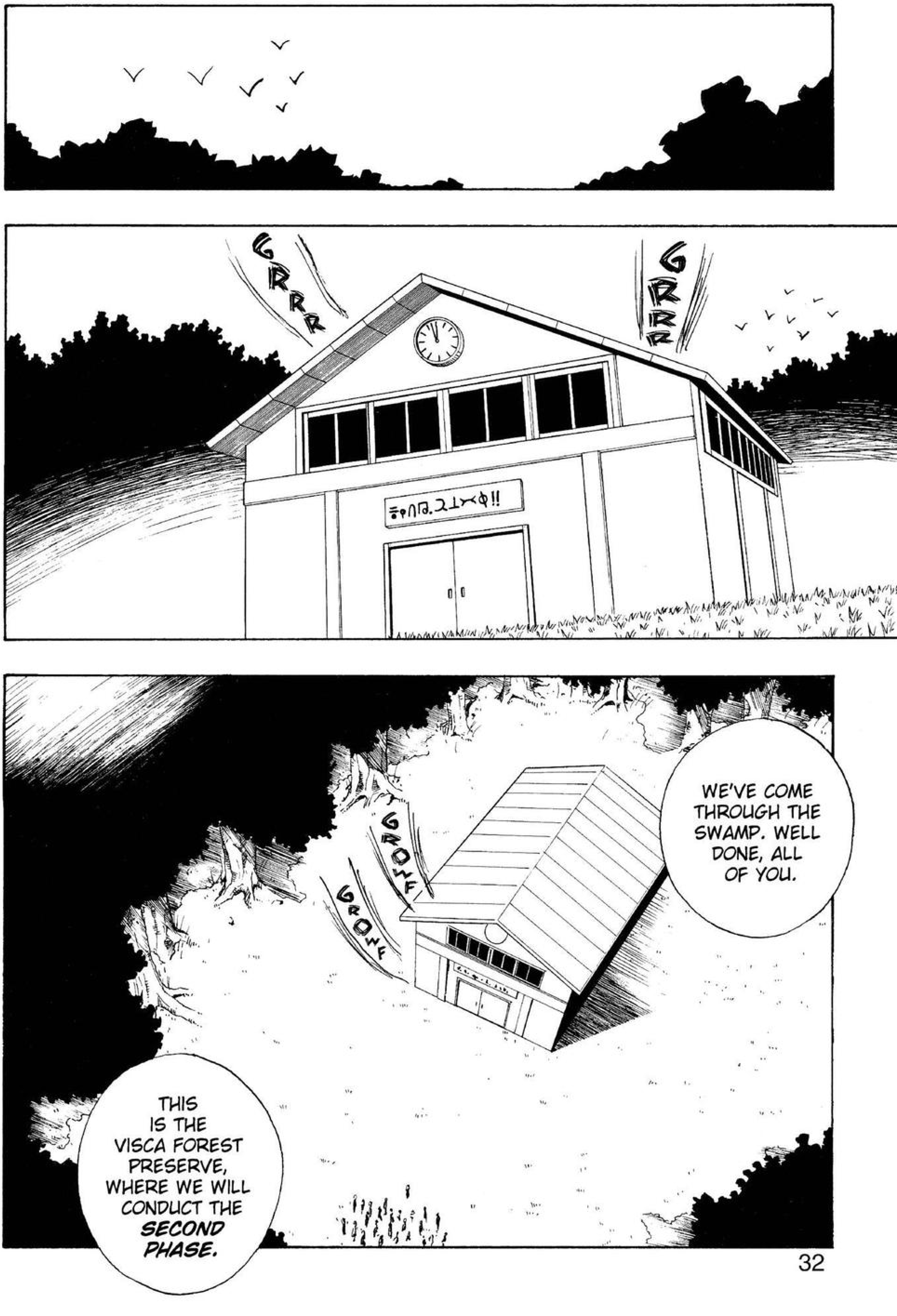

SCREE SCREE

READ THIS WAY

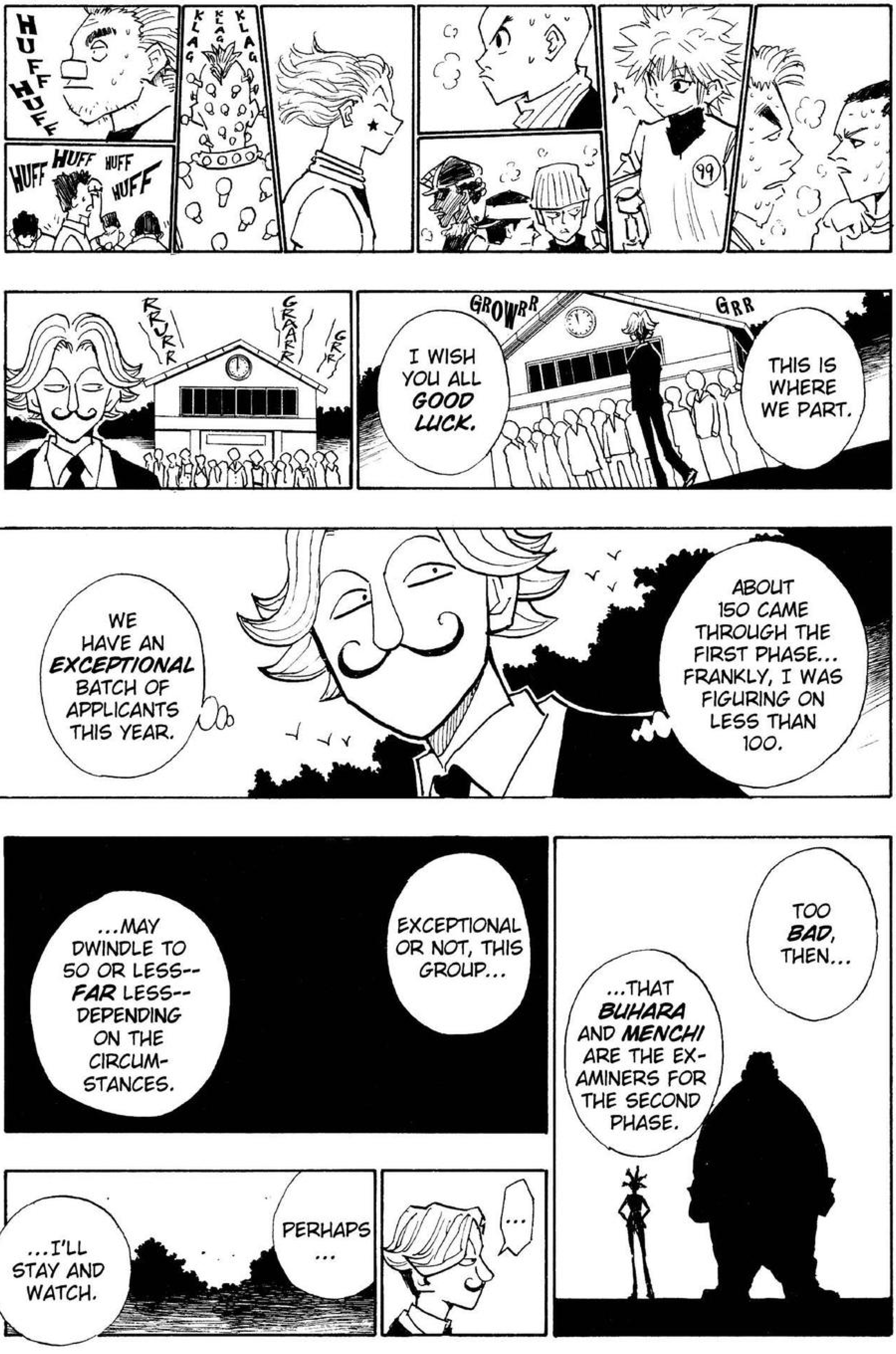

SNIIIFF
THIS WAY!
SNIFF
SNIFF
YOU REALLY **SMELL** HIM?
YEAH!
LEORIO WEARS DISTINCTIVE COLOGNE. ITS **SCENT** CARRIES FOR **SEVERAL MILES.**
FOR YOU, PERHAPS.
NOTICE THE **ANIMAL CARCASSES** LITTERING THE WAY?
THEY PROBABLY TRIED TO **ATTACK** HISOKA.
...
SAY, KURAPIKA...
...WHAT DO YOU THINK HISOKA **MEANT** WHEN HE SAID...
...LEORIO AND I **PASSED?**
...I'M DONE WITH HIM... HE'S ALIVE, AND HE'S PASSED...
AS HE SEEMS TO SEE HIMSELF AS AN EXAMINER...
...I WOULD SAY IT WAS YOUR **GRADE.**

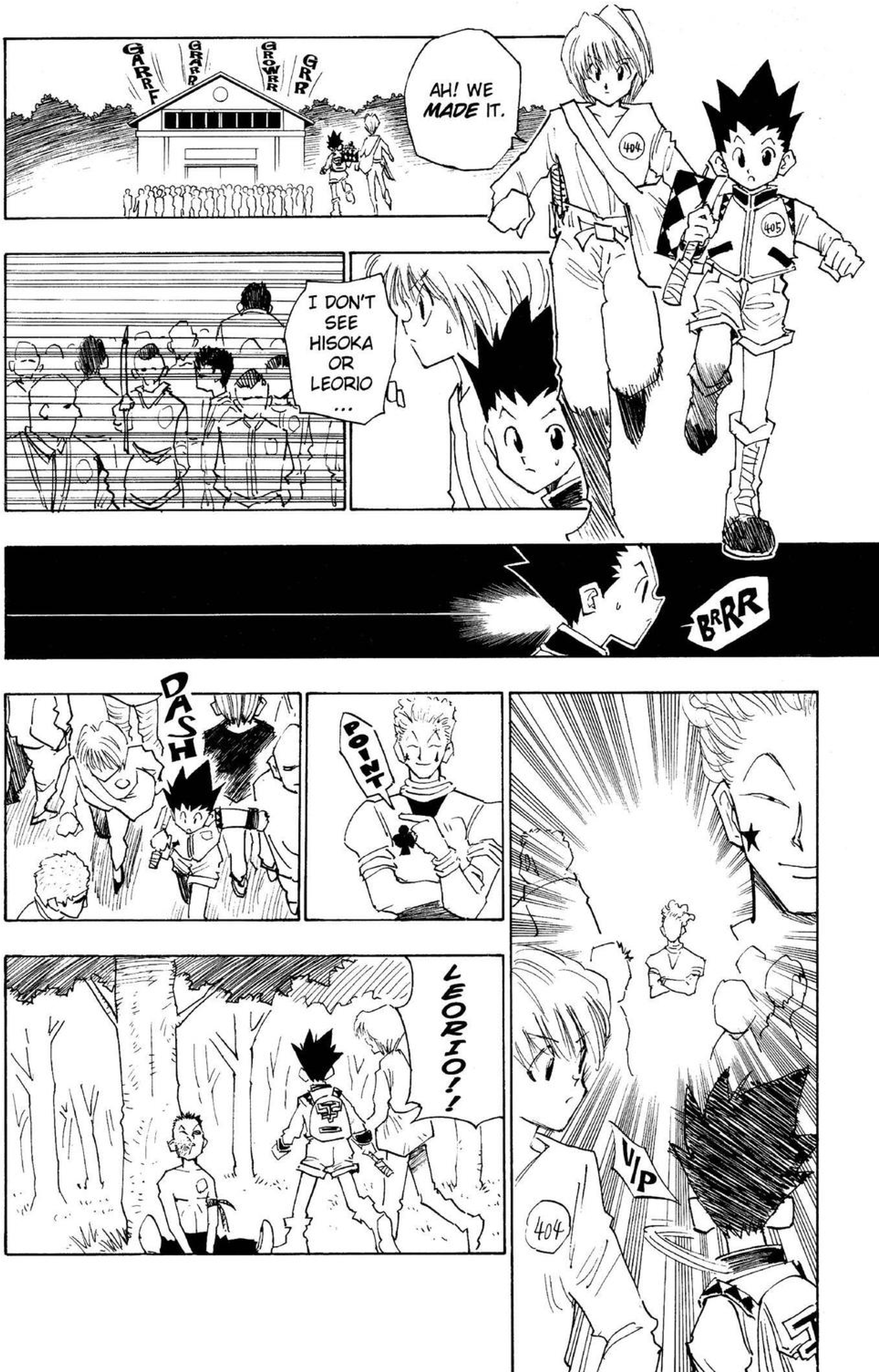

I DUNNO...
...ALL HE DID WAS LOOK AT ME FOR A SECOND.
YOU WERE ALSO THE ONLY ONE TO GET A HIT ON HIM.
THAT'S TRUE...
...BUT WHAT ABOUT LEORIO? HISOKA WALLOPED HIM...
...BUT HE STILL "PASSED."
...
PERHAPS HISOKA IS RELYING ON WHAT HIS INSTINCTS TELL HIM.
!
YEAH, KINDA LIKE KILLUA.
I CAN SMELL IT.
IN MY OPINION, HISOKA IS TOO BLOODTHIRSTY TO BE A HUNTER!
EVEN SO...
...HIS TECHNIQUE IS BRILLIANT, AND HIS DEXTERITY NEARLY SUPERHUMAN.
IN TERMS OF COMBAT CAPABILITY, I'VE NEVER ENCOUNTERED HIS EQUAL...
...AND THOSE WITH UNIQUE ABILITIES OFTEN SENSE SUCH THINGS IN OTHERS.
WITH HIS INTUITION AND EXPERIENCE, HE MAY VERY WELL HAVE PICKED UP ON YOUR POTENTIAL AND DEEMED IT WORTHY.

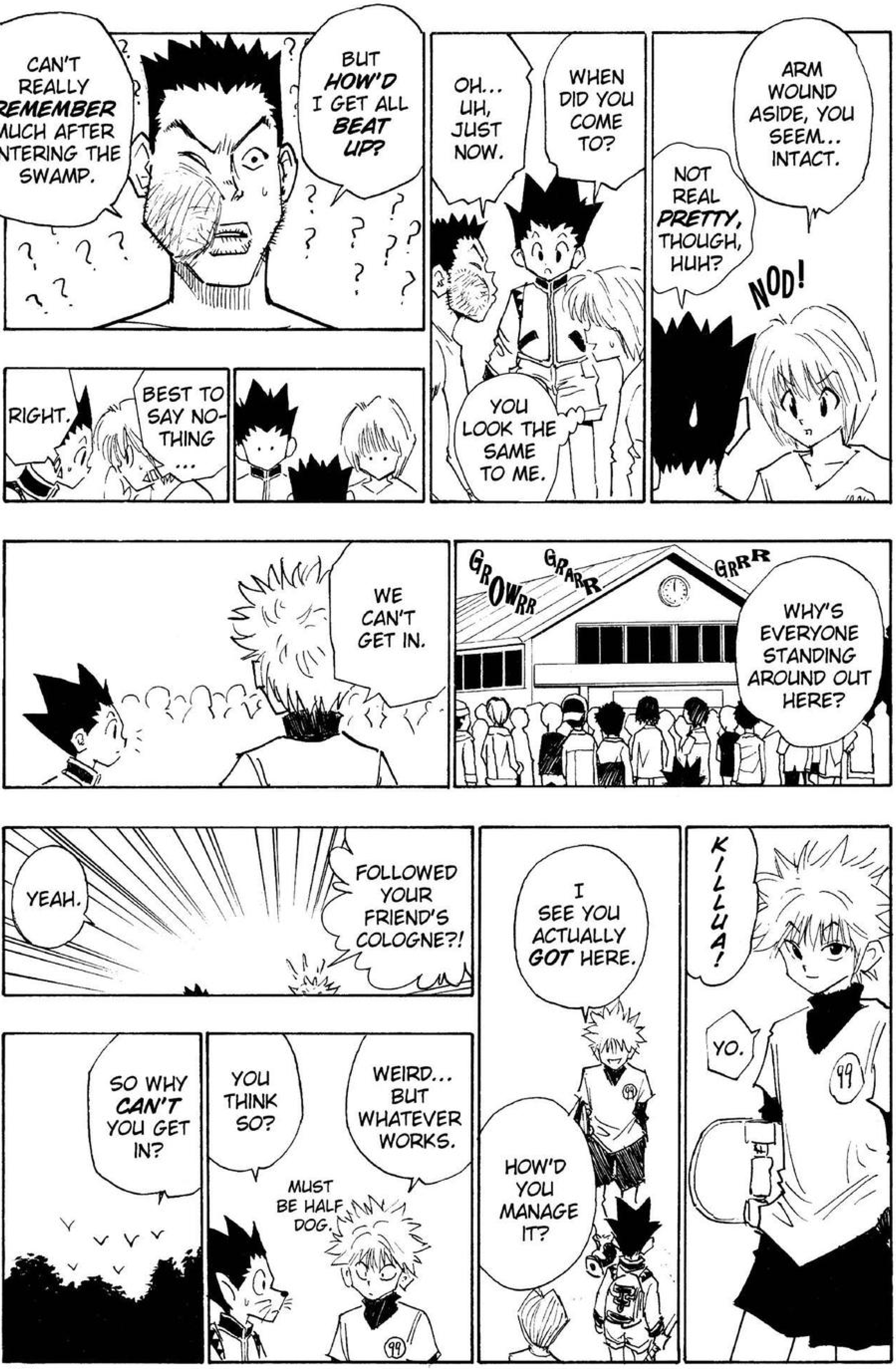

HE MAY HAVE DECIDED...
...THAT TO KILL YOU NOW WOULD BE PREMATURE.
SORRY...
...THAT WAS OUT OF LINE.
IT'S OKAY.
I'M STARTING TO UNDERSTAND...
...THE WEIRDNESS I FELT BACK THERE.
ALL THESE DEAD BODIES LYING AROUND...
...AND HISOKA, THE KILLER, WALKING TOWARD ME.
HONESTLY, I WAS SCARED! I WANTED TO RUN, BUT I COULDN'T!
I KNEW I WAS NO MATCH FOR HIM!! I FIGURED I WAS DEAD!!
THE THING IS...
...EVEN FACING CERTAIN DEATH...
...WELL, IT'S WEIRD...
...BUT IT FELT PRETTY EXCITING, TOO.

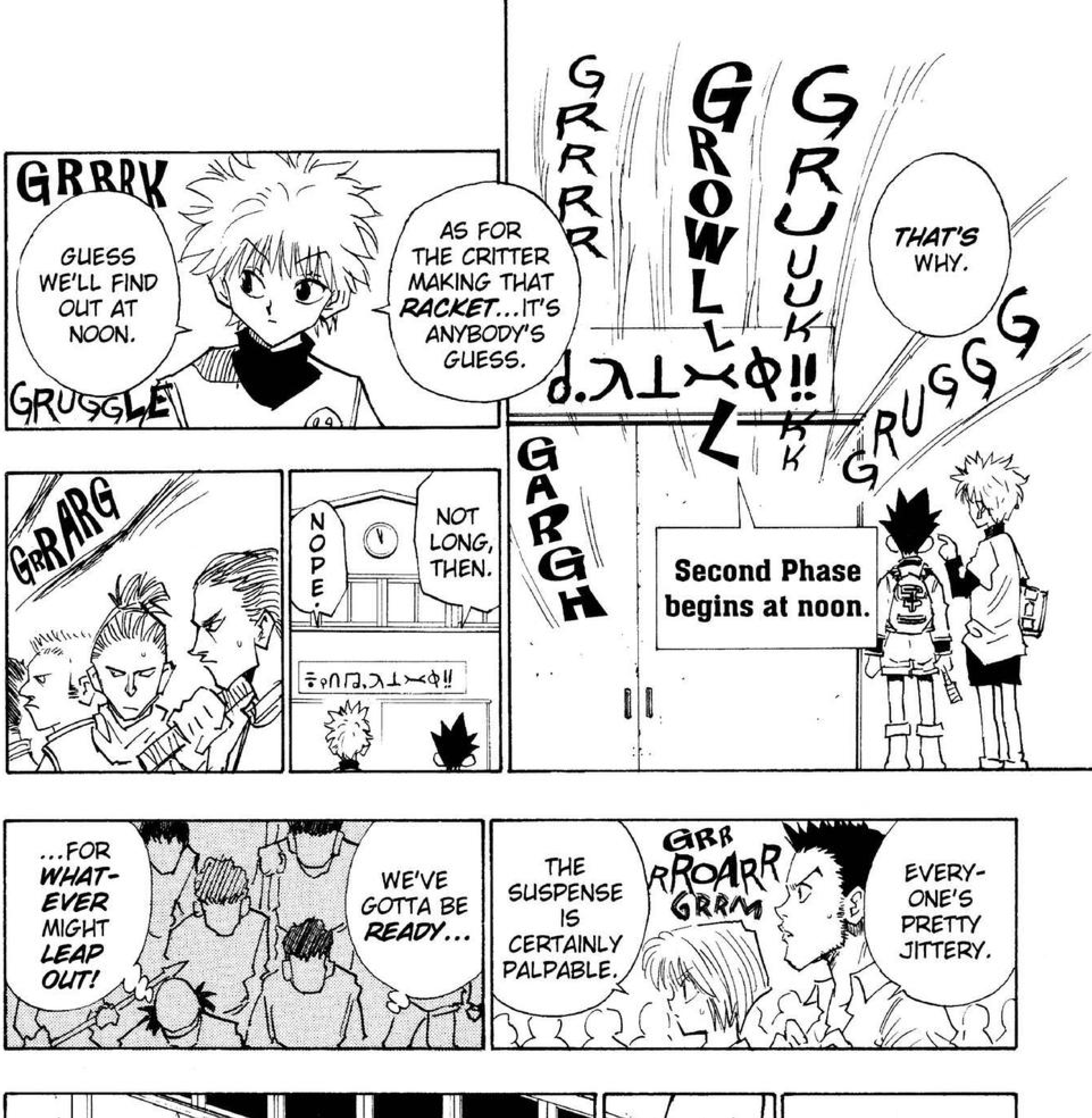

GRRR
GRRR
GROWF
GROWF
WE'VE COME THROUGH THE SWAMP. WELL DONE, ALL OF YOU.
THIS IS THE VISCA FOREST PRESERVE, WHERE WE WILL CONDUCT THE ***SECOND PHASE.***

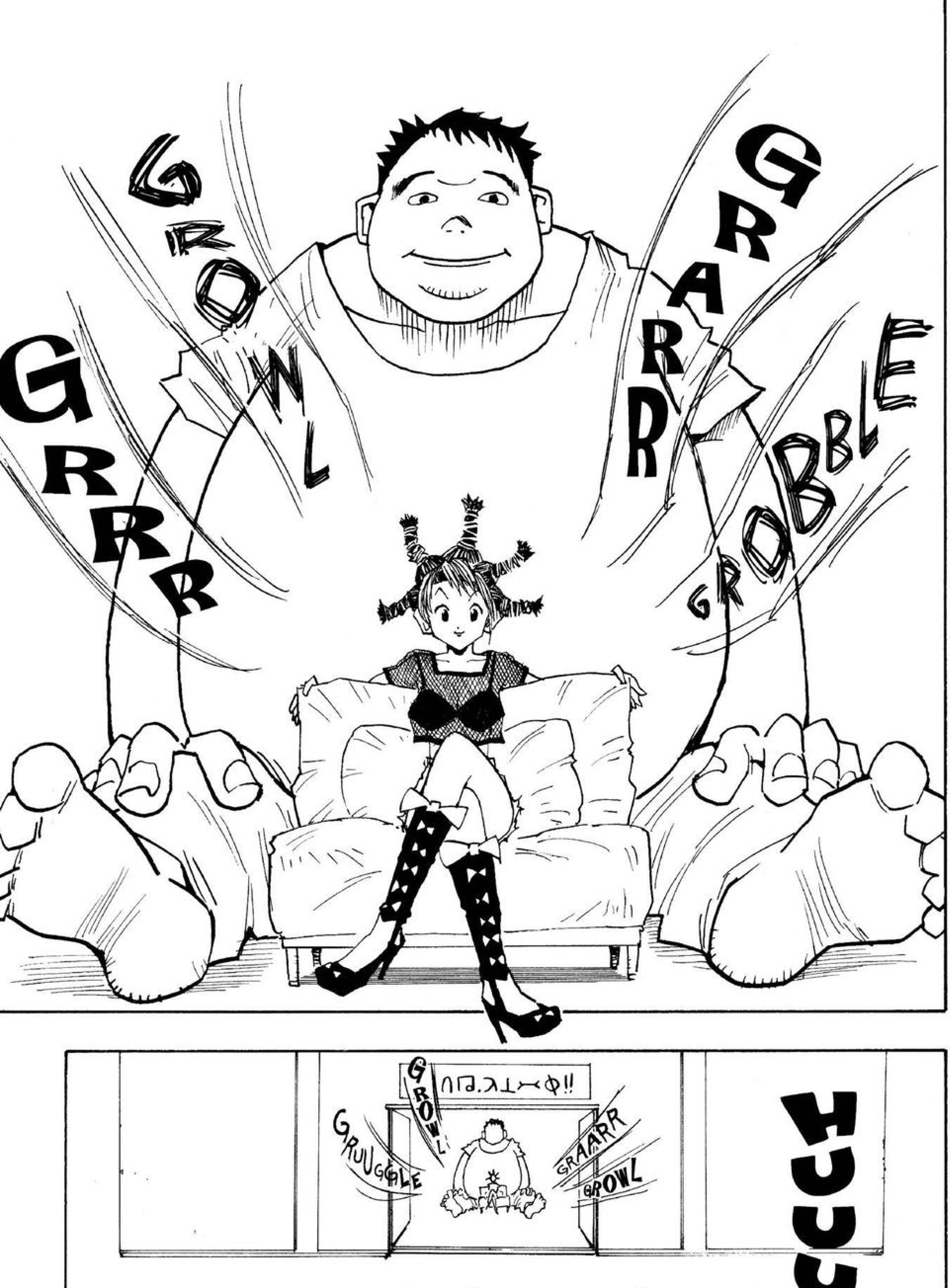
READ THIS WAY

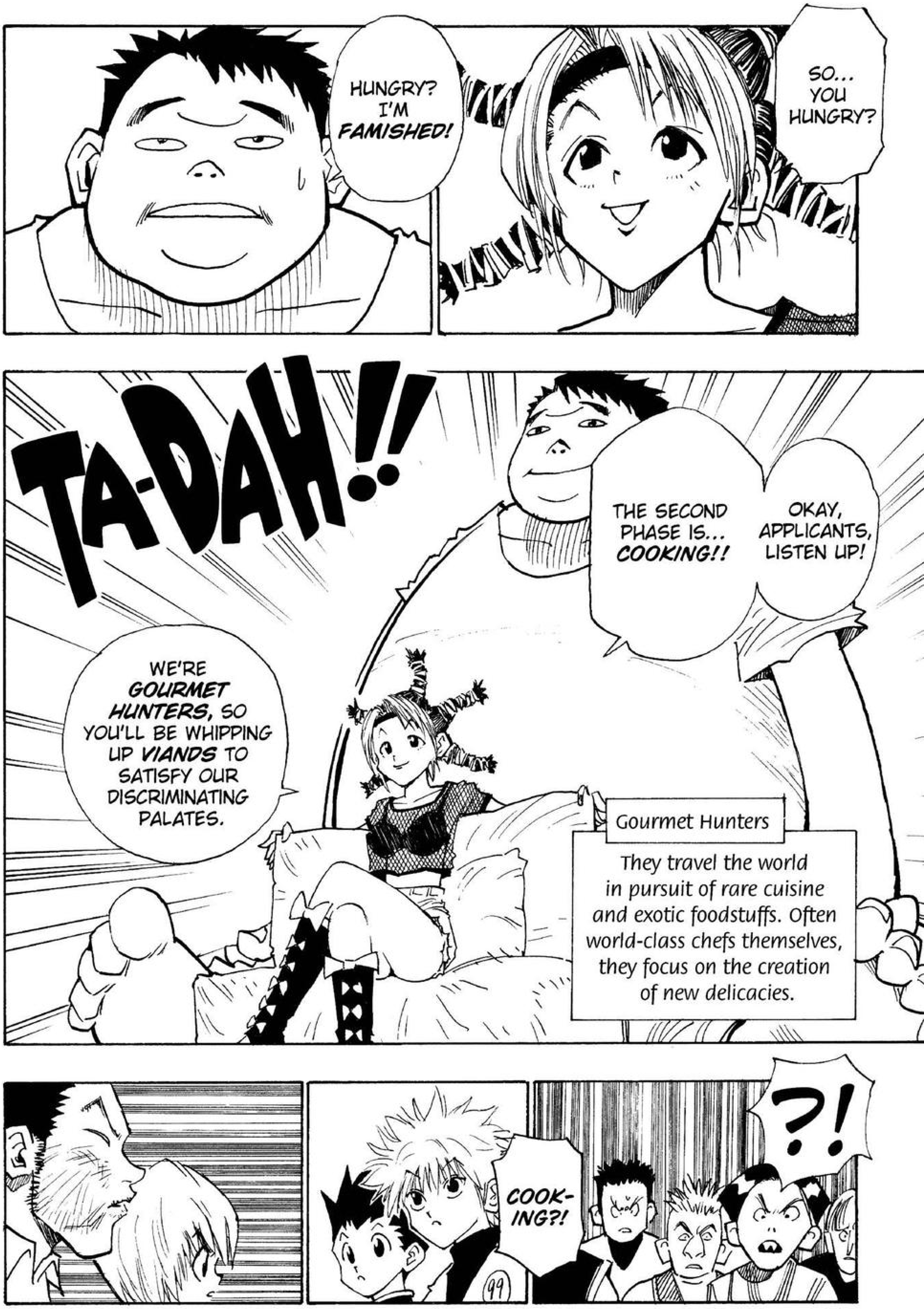

KLAG KLAG KLAG
HUFF HUFF
HUFF HUFF HUFF HUFF
GROWRR
GRR
THIS IS WHERE WE PART.
I WISH YOU ALL GOOD LUCK.
RRURR
GRAARR
GRR
ABOUT 150 CAME THROUGH THE FIRST PHASE... FRANKLY, I WAS FIGURING ON LESS THAN 100.
WE HAVE AN EXCEPTIONAL BATCH OF APPLICANTS THIS YEAR.
TOO BAD, THEN...
...THAT BUHARA AND MENCHI ARE THE EXAMINERS FOR THE SECOND PHASE.
EXCEPTIONAL OR NOT, THIS GROUP...
...MAY DWINDLE TO 50 OR LESS--FAR LESS--DEPENDING ON THE CIRCUMSTANCES.
...
PERHAPS...
...I'LL STAY AND WATCH.


GRR
GROWRR
GRARR
GARRF
AH! WE *MADE* IT.
404
405
I DON'T SEE HISOKA OR LEORIO ...
BRRR
VIP
404
POINT
DASH
LEORIO!!


ARM WOUND ASIDE, YOU SEEM... INTACT.
NOT REAL PRETTY, THOUGH, HUH?
NOD!
WHEN DID YOU COME TO?
OH... UH, JUST NOW.
YOU LOOK THE SAME TO ME.
BUT HOW'D I GET ALL BEAT UP?
CAN'T REALLY REMEMBER MUCH AFTER ENTERING THE SWAMP.
BEST TO SAY NOTHING...
RIGHT.
GROWRR
GRARRR
GRRR
WHY'S EVERYONE STANDING AROUND OUT HERE?
WE CAN'T GET IN.
KILLUA!
YO.
I SEE YOU ACTUALLY GOT HERE.
HOW'D YOU MANAGE IT?
FOLLOWED YOUR FRIEND'S COLOGNE?!
YEAH.
WEIRD... BUT WHATEVER WORKS.
YOU THINK SO?
MUST BE HALF DOG.
SO WHY CAN'T YOU GET IN?

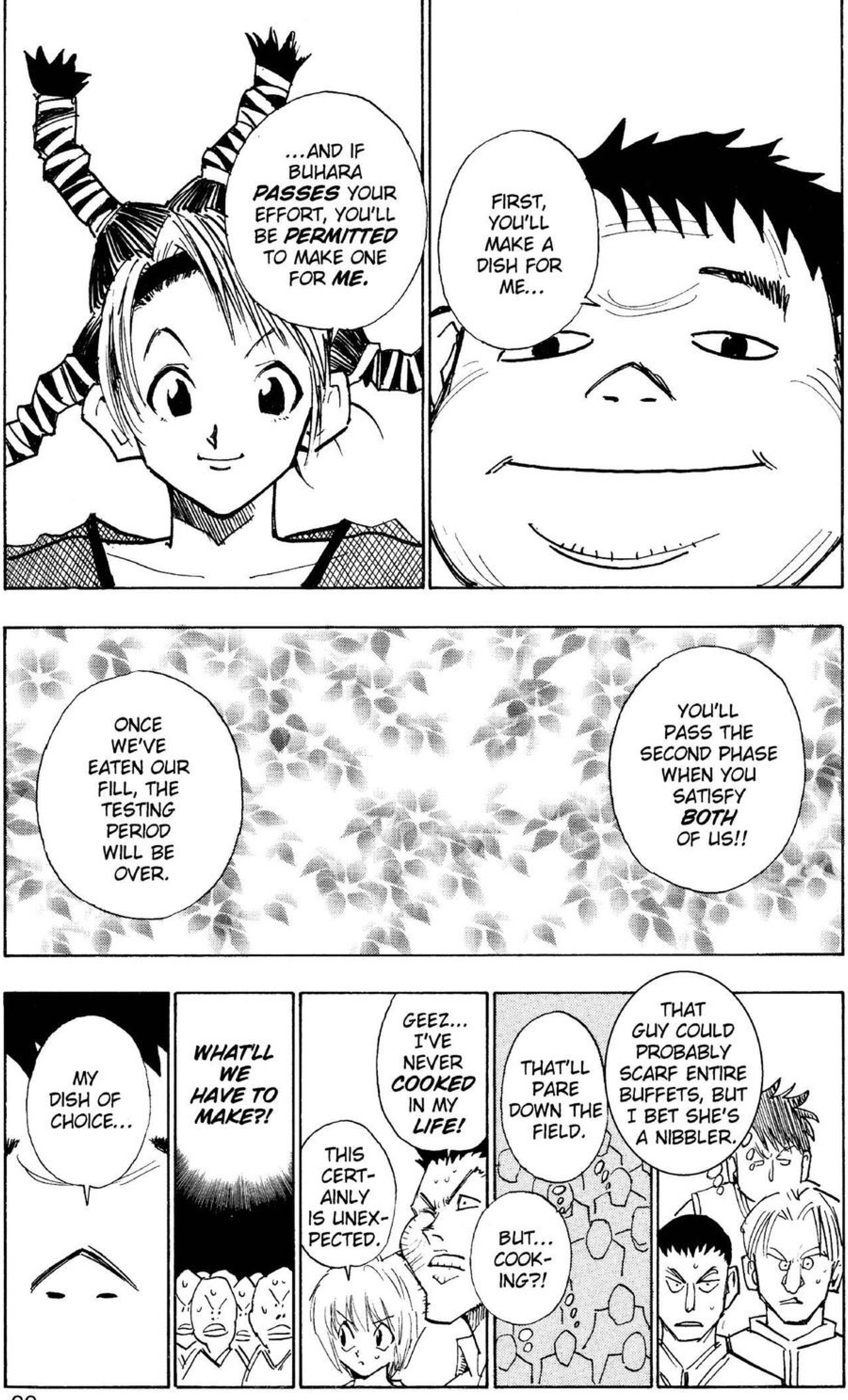

GRRRR
GROWLLL
GRUUUKK!!
THAT'S WHY.
GRUGGG
GARGH
Second Phase begins at noon.
AS FOR THE CRITTER MAKING THAT RACKET... IT'S ANYBODY'S GUESS.
GRRRK
GUESS WE'LL FIND OUT AT NOON.
GRUGGLE
NOT LONG, THEN.
NOPE.
GRRARG
EVERYONE'S PRETTY JITTERY.
GRR RROARR GRRM
THE SUSPENSE IS CERTAINLY PALPABLE.
WE'VE GOTTA BE READY...
...FOR WHATEVER MIGHT LEAP OUT!
PING
CREEAK
!
GRAARR
GRRRR
GRUUGH

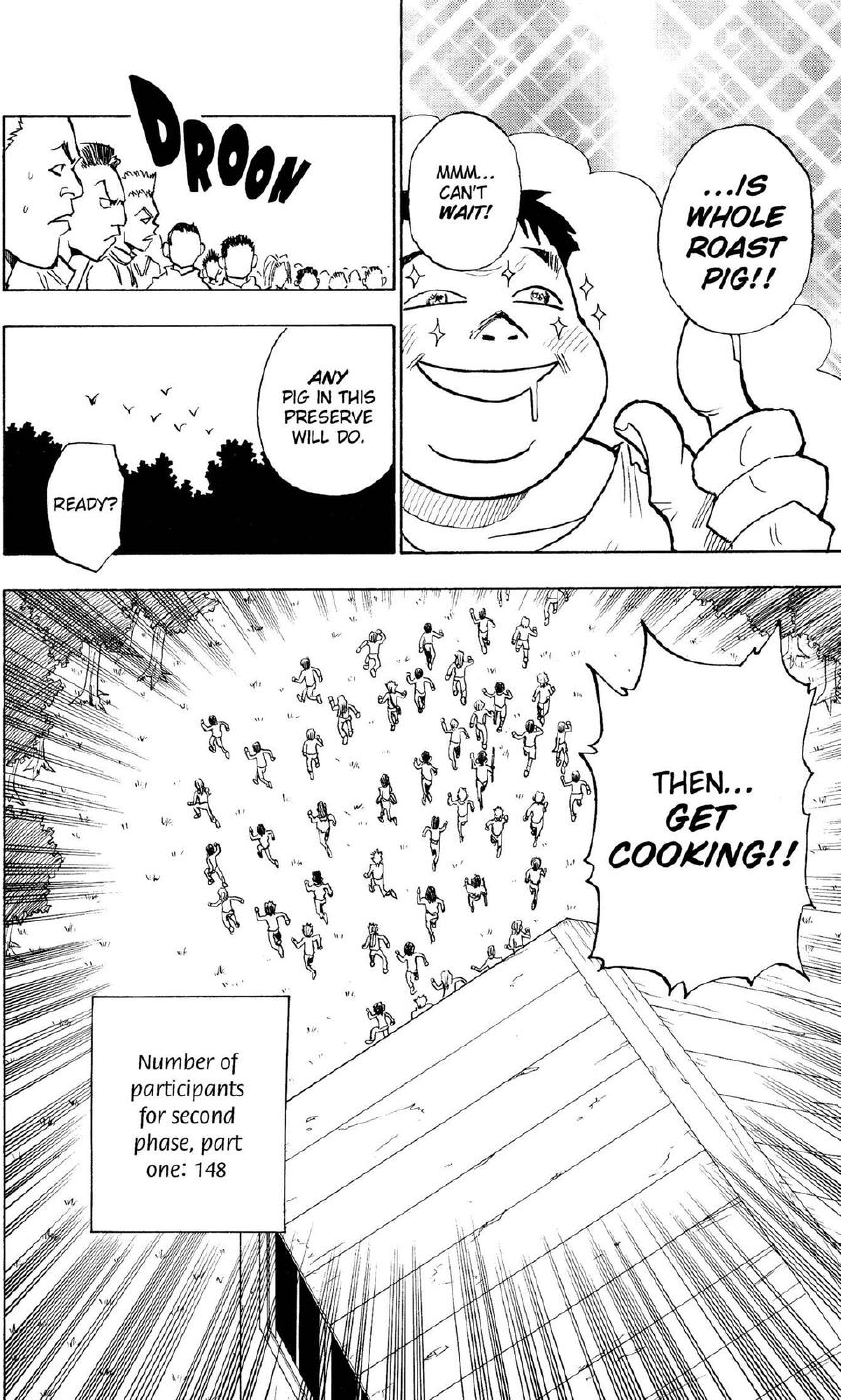

GRAARRR
GROBBLE
GROWL
GRRRR
HUUUH?
GROWL
GRAARR
GROWL
GRUUGGLE

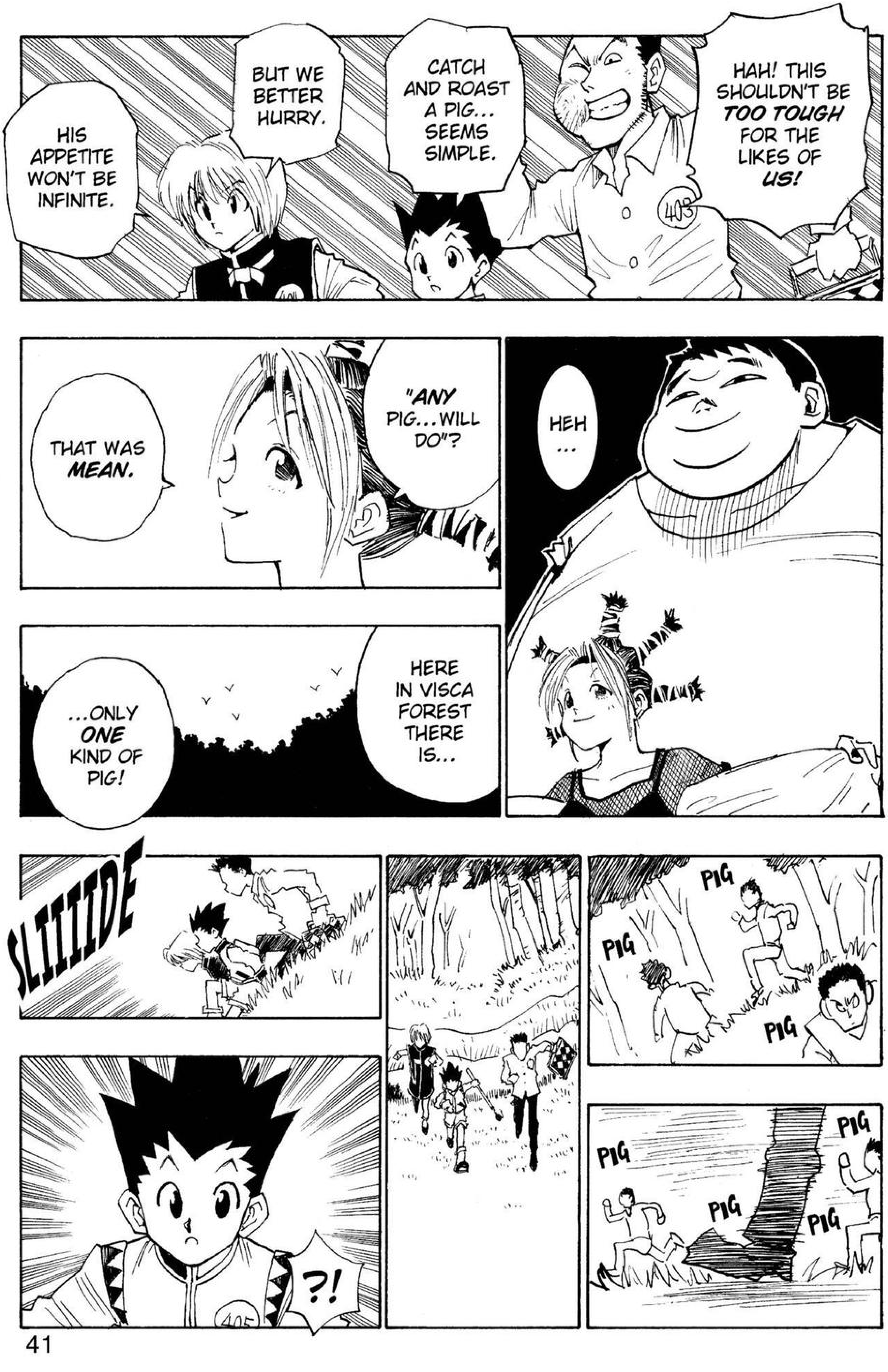

SO... YOU HUNGRY?
HUNGRY? I'M *FAMISHED!*
TA-DAH!!
OKAY, APPLICANTS, LISTEN UP!
THE SECOND PHASE IS... *COOKING!!*
WE'RE *GOURMET HUNTERS,* SO YOU'LL BE WHIPPING UP *VIANDS* TO SATISFY OUR DISCRIMINATING PALATES.
?!
COOK-ING?!
99

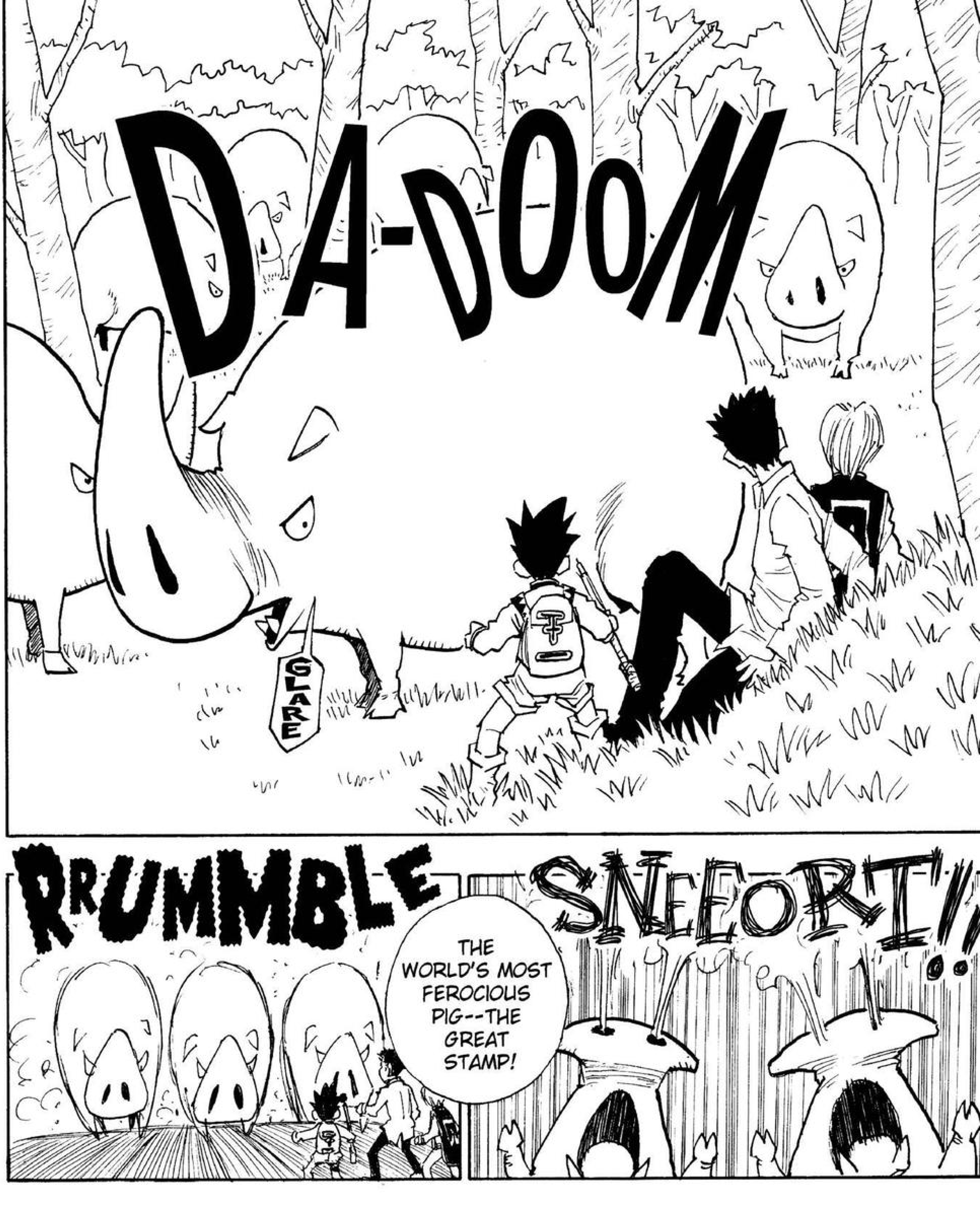
Gourmet Hunters

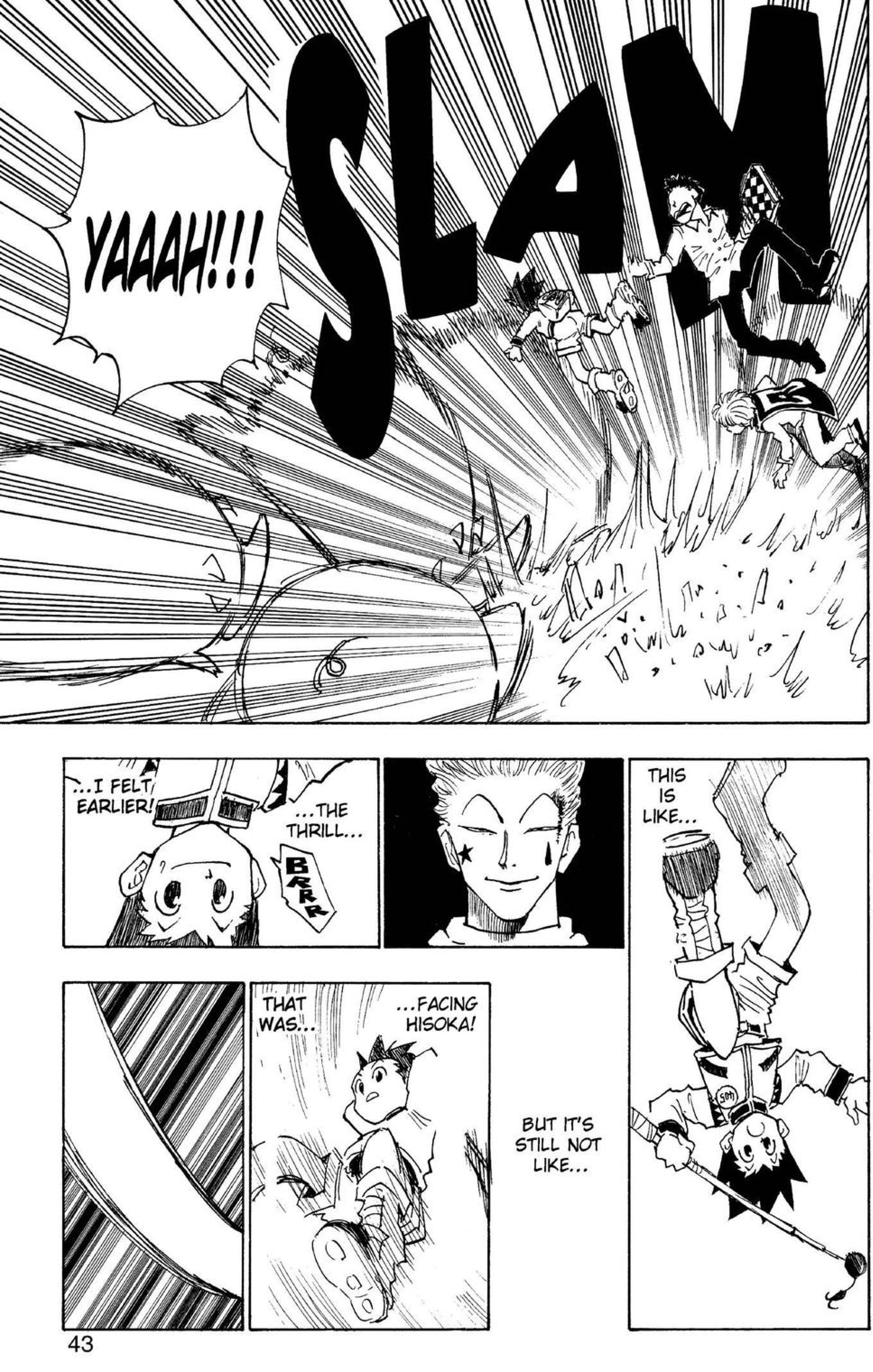
They travel the world in pursuit of rare cuisine and exotic foodstuffs. Often world-class chefs themselves, they focus on the creation of new delicacies.

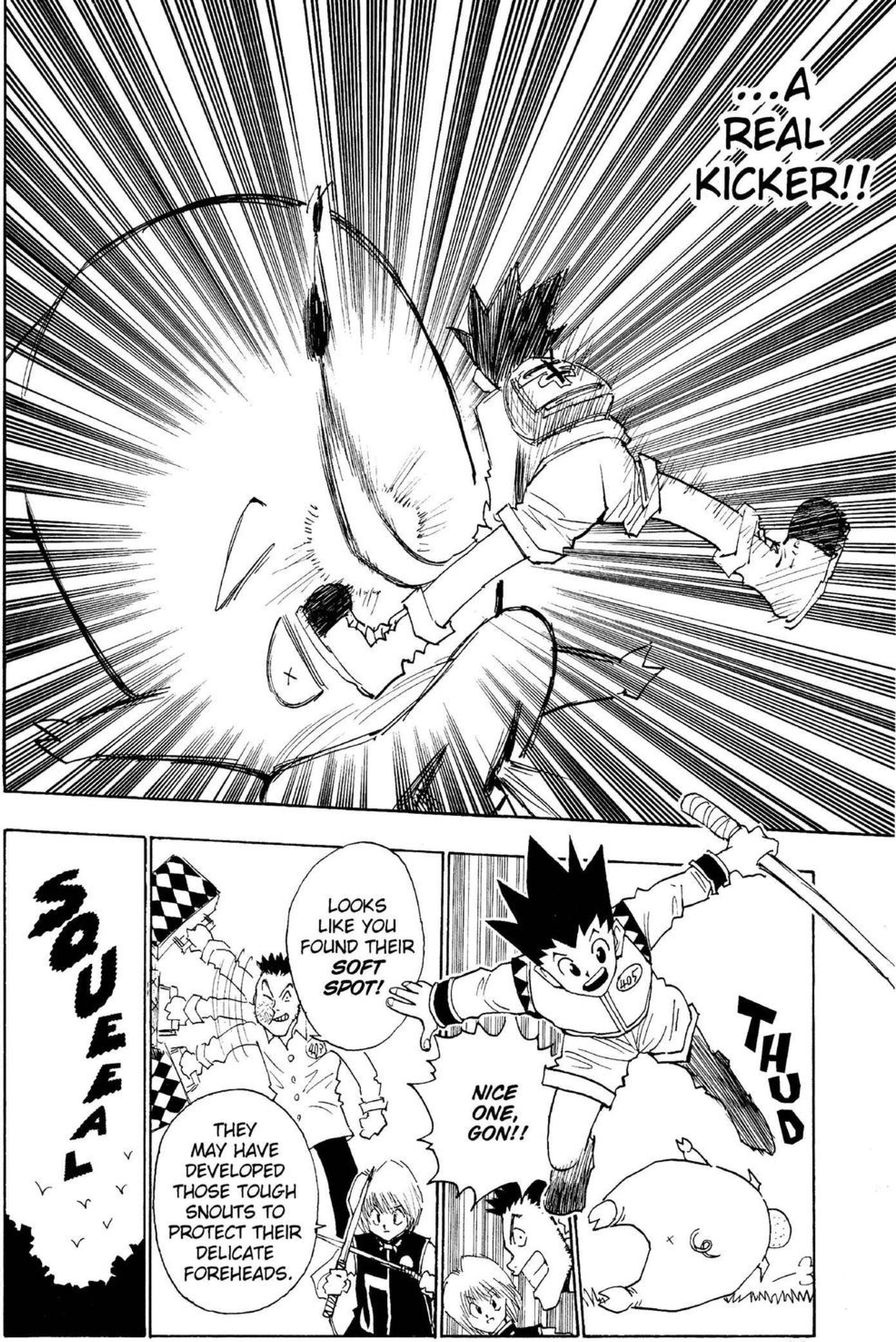

FIRST, YOU'LL MAKE A DISH FOR ME...
...AND IF BUHARA **PASSES** YOUR EFFORT, YOU'LL BE **PERMITTED** TO MAKE ONE FOR **ME.**
YOU'LL PASS THE SECOND PHASE WHEN YOU SATISFY **BOTH** OF US!!
ONCE WE'VE EATEN OUR FILL, THE TESTING PERIOD WILL BE OVER.
THAT GUY COULD PROBABLY SCARF ENTIRE BUFFETS, BUT I BET SHE'S A NIBBLER.
THAT'LL PARE DOWN THE FIELD.
BUT... COOKING?!
GEEZ... I'VE NEVER **COOKED** IN MY **LIFE!**
THIS CERTAINLY IS UNEXPECTED.
WHAT'LL WE HAVE TO MAKE?!
MY DISH OF CHOICE...

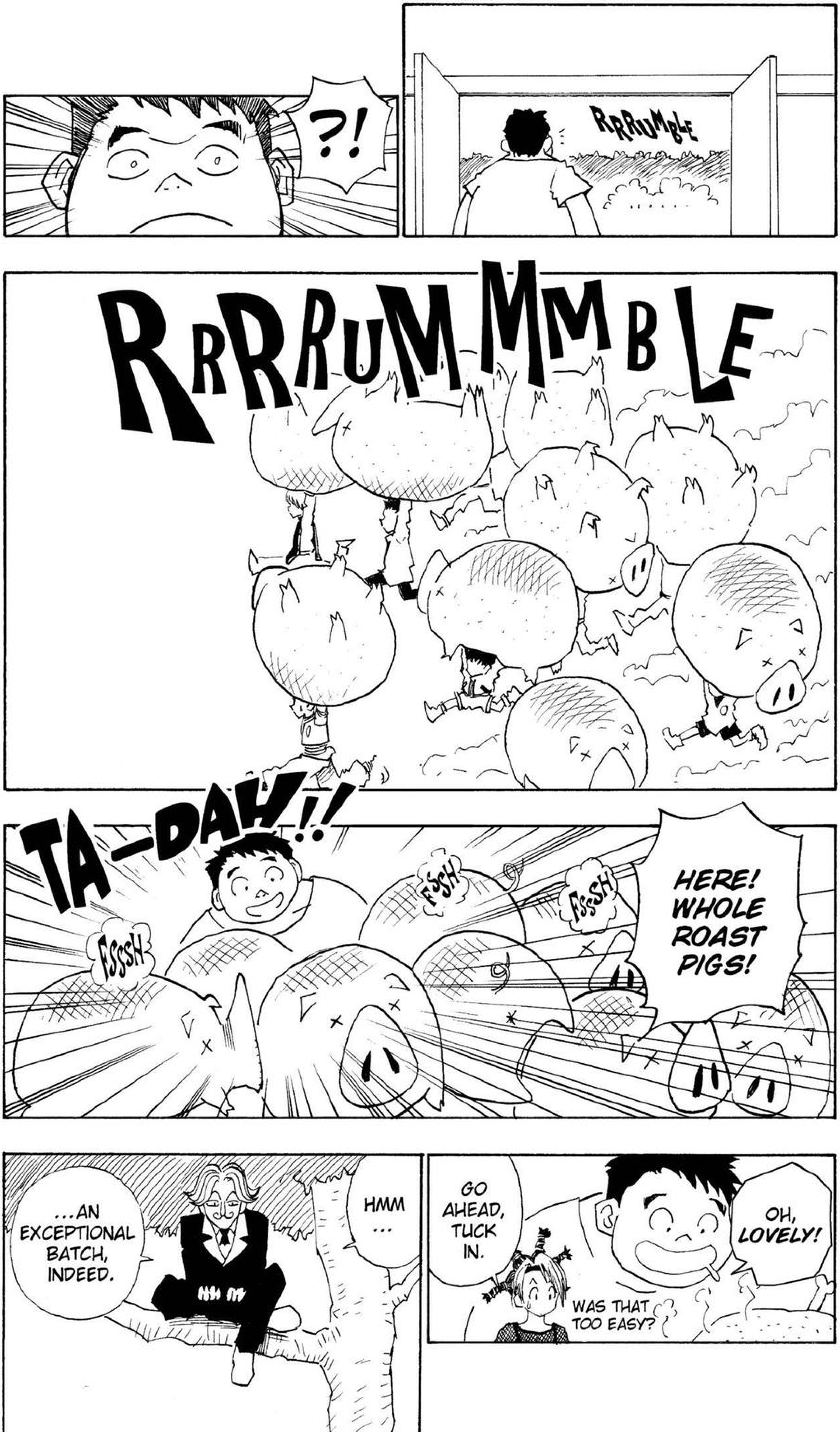

...IS WHOLE ROAST PIG!!
MMM... CAN'T WAIT!
DROON
ANY PIG IN THIS PRESERVE WILL DO.
READY?
THEN... GET COOKING!!
Number of participants for second phase, part one: 148


HAH! THIS SHOULDN'T BE TOO TOUGH FOR THE LIKES OF US!
CATCH AND ROAST A PIG... SEEMS SIMPLE.
BUT WE BETTER HURRY.
HIS APPETITE WON'T BE INFINITE.
HEH...
"ANY PIG...WILL DO"?
THAT WAS MEAN.
HERE IN VISCA FOREST THERE IS...
...ONLY ONE KIND OF PIG!
PIG
PIG
PIG
SLIIIDE
PIG
PIG
PIG
PIG
?!


DA-DOOM
GLARE
RRUMMBLE
THE WORLD'S MOST FEROCIOUS PIG--THE GREAT STAMP!
SNEEORT!!
THEY'RE FAST, EVIL-TEMPERED BULLDOZERS!!
HEH HEH
IF AN APPLICANT'S TOO SLOW, HE'S SLOP FOR HOGS!!


SLAM
YAAAH!!!
THIS IS LIKE...
...THE THRILL...
BRRR
...I FELT EARLIER!
BUT IT'S STILL NOT LIKE...
THAT WAS...
...FACING HISOKA!

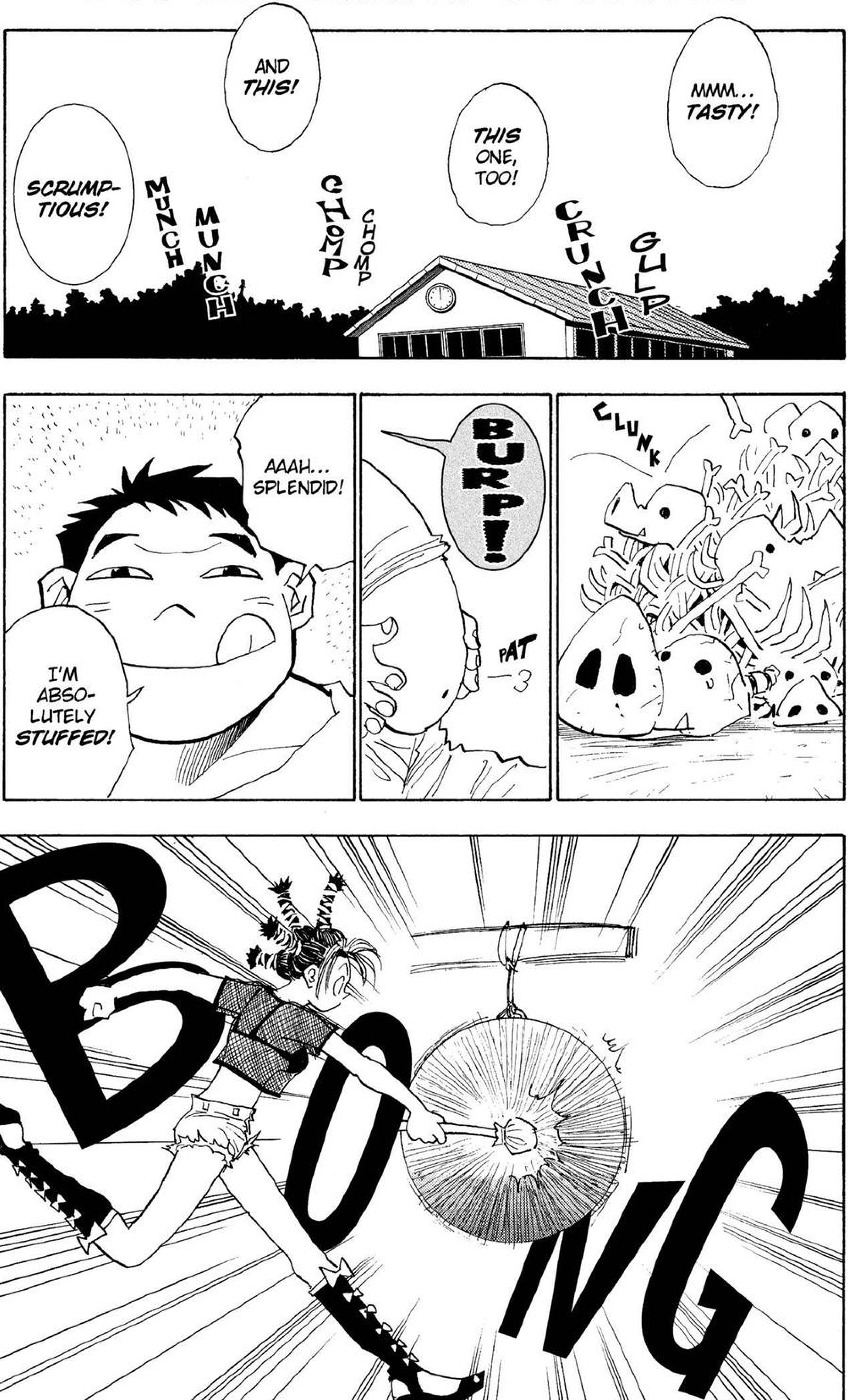

...A REAL KICKER!!
THUD
LOOKS LIKE YOU FOUND THEIR *SOFT SPOT!*
NICE ONE, GON!!
THEY MAY HAVE DEVELOPED THOSE TOUGH SNOUTS TO PROTECT THEIR DELICATE FOREHEADS.
SQUEEAL


RRRUMBLE
?!
RRRRUMMMMBLE
TA-DAH!!
FSSH
FSSSH
FSSSH
HERE! WHOLE ROAST PIGS!
OH, LOVELY!
GO AHEAD, TUCK IN.
WAS THAT TOO EASY?
HMM...
...AN EXCEPTIONAL BATCH, INDEED.

Buhara

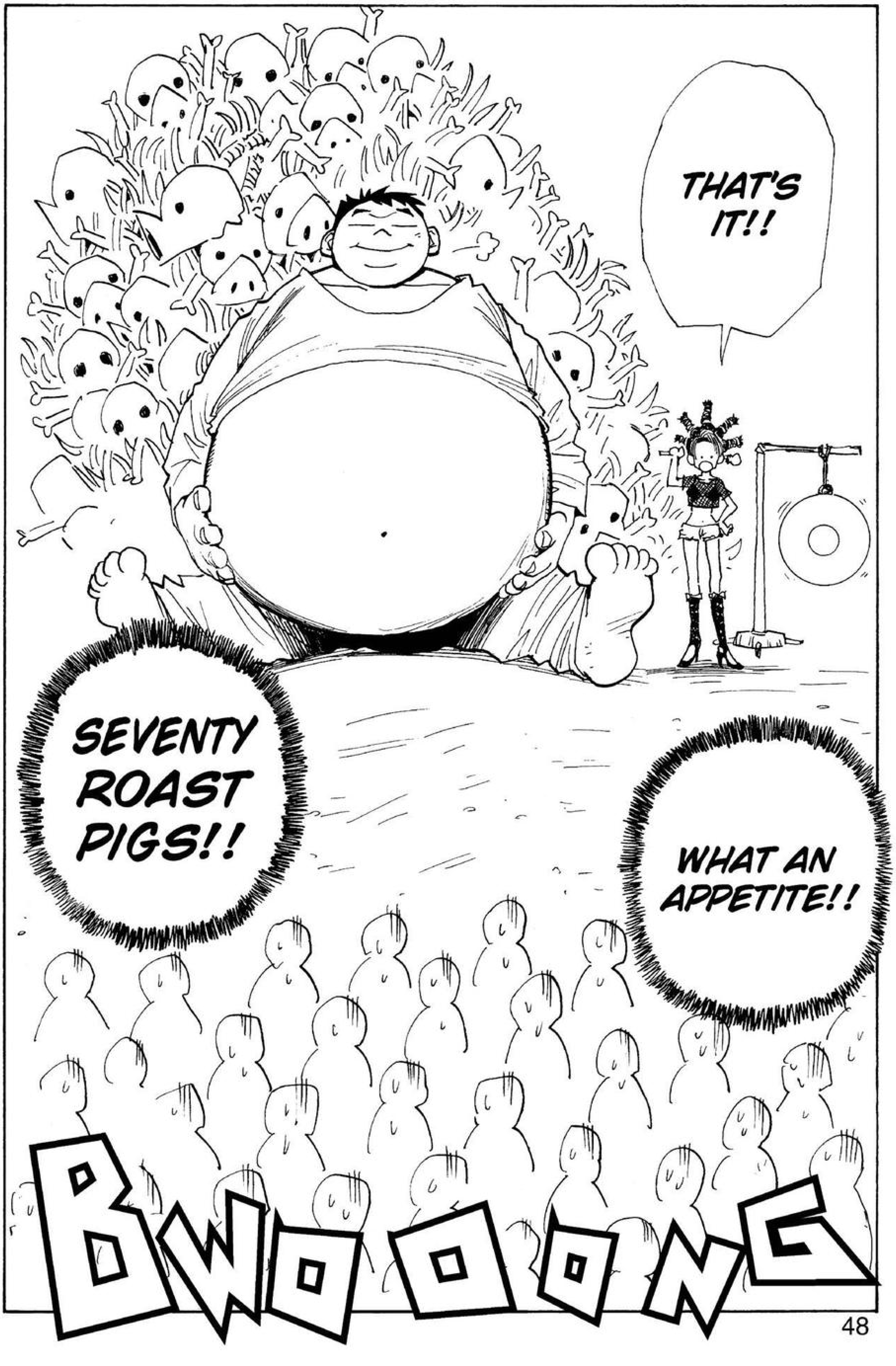
Chapter 11

The Inevitable Outcome

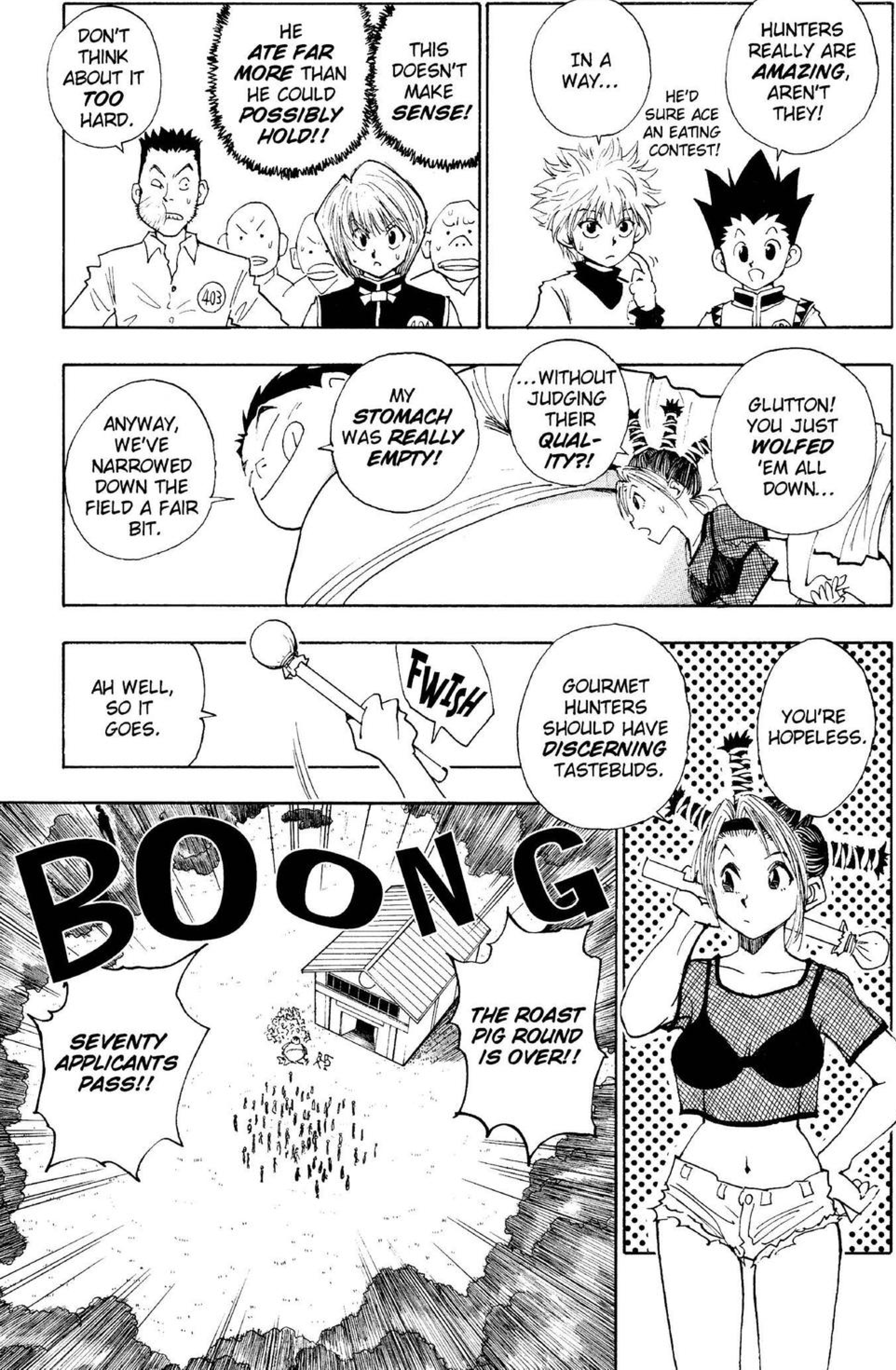

MMM... TASTY!
GULP
CRUNCH
THIS ONE, TOO!
CHOMP CHOMP
AND THIS!
MUNCH MUNCH
SCRUMPTIOUS!
AAAH... SPLENDID!
I'M ABSOLUTELY STUFFED!
BURP!
PAT
CLUNK
BOONG

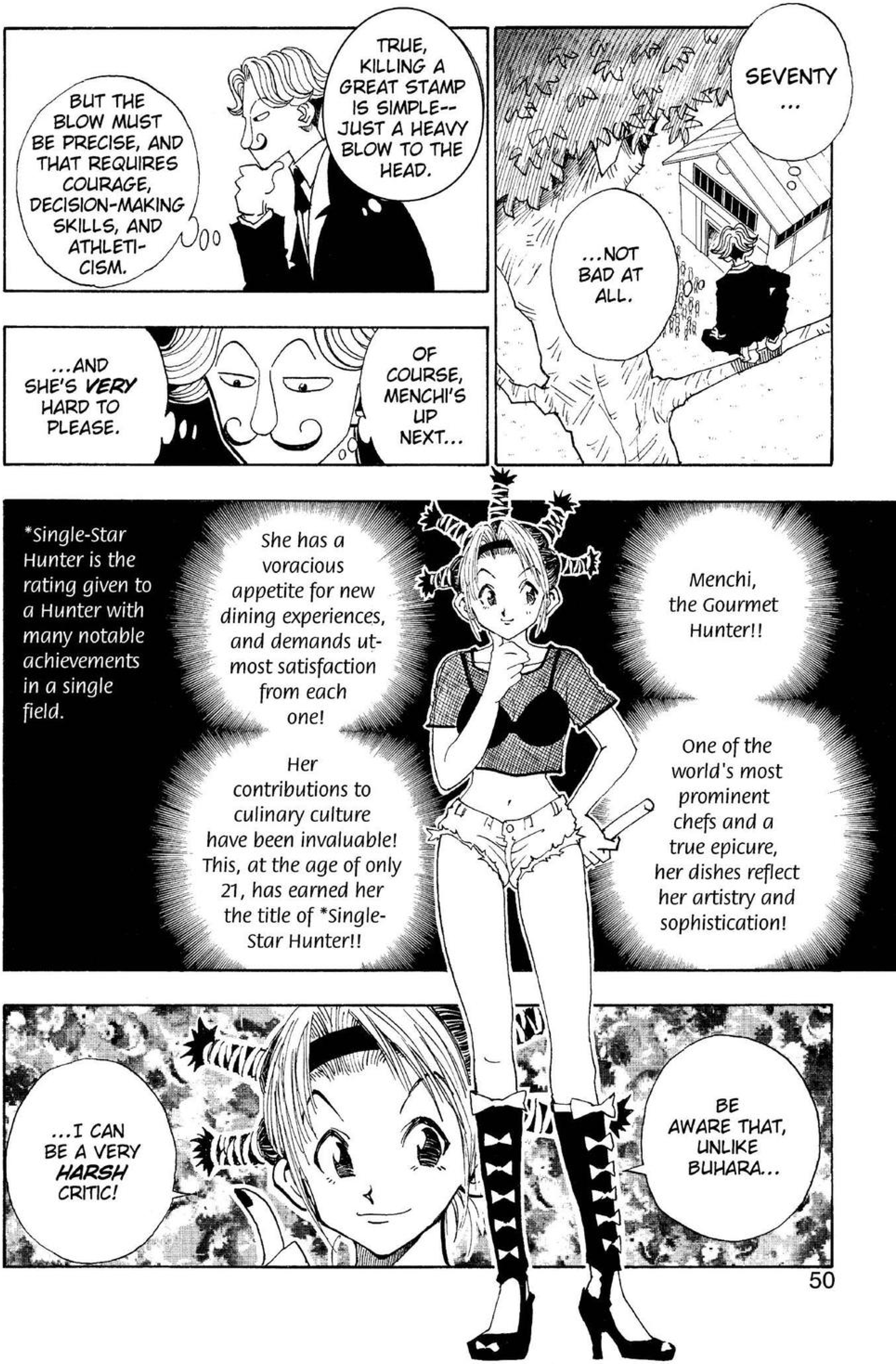
Chapter 11

The Inevitable Outcome

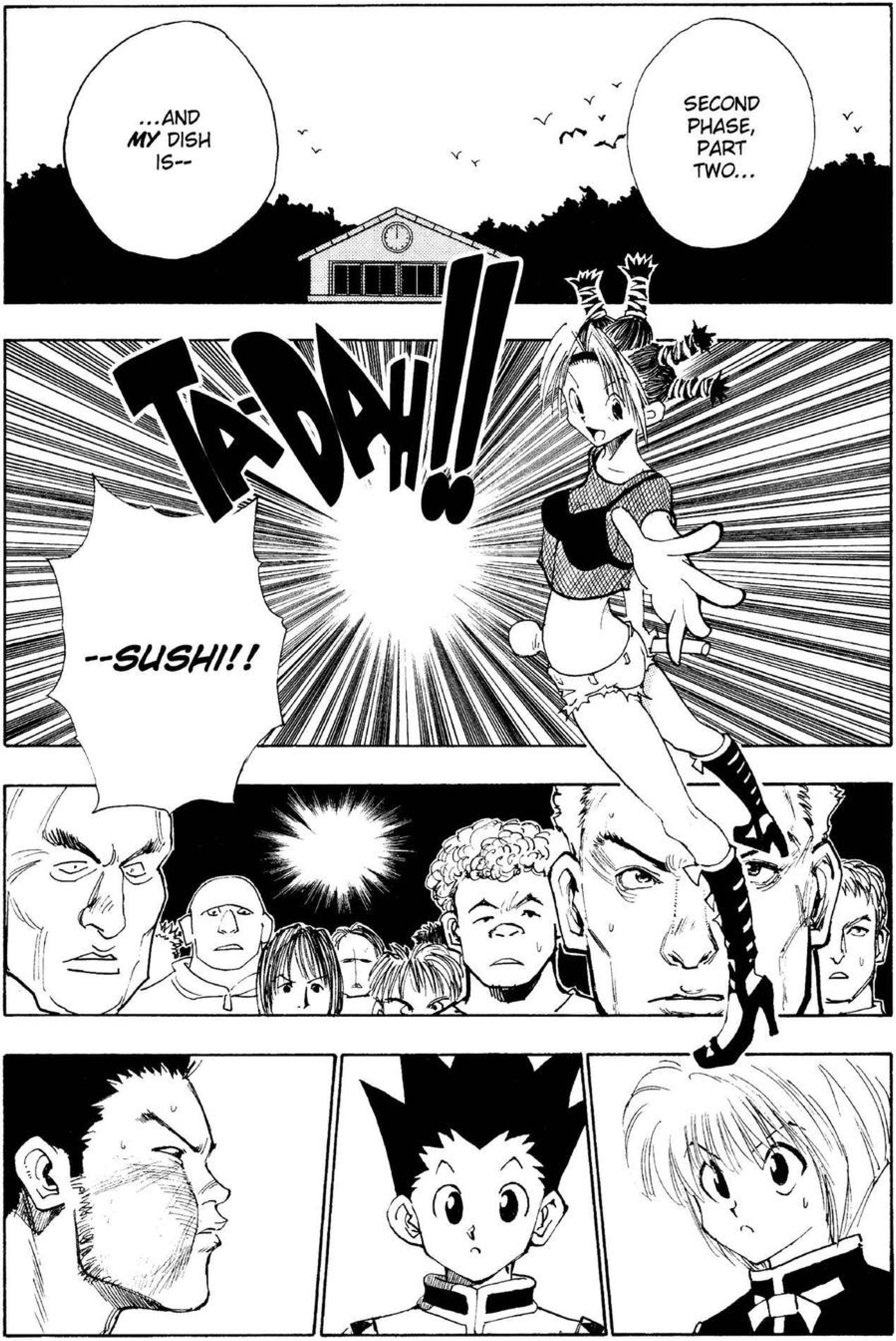

THAT'S IT!!
SEVENTY ROAST PIGS!!
WHAT AN APPETITE!!
BWOOONG

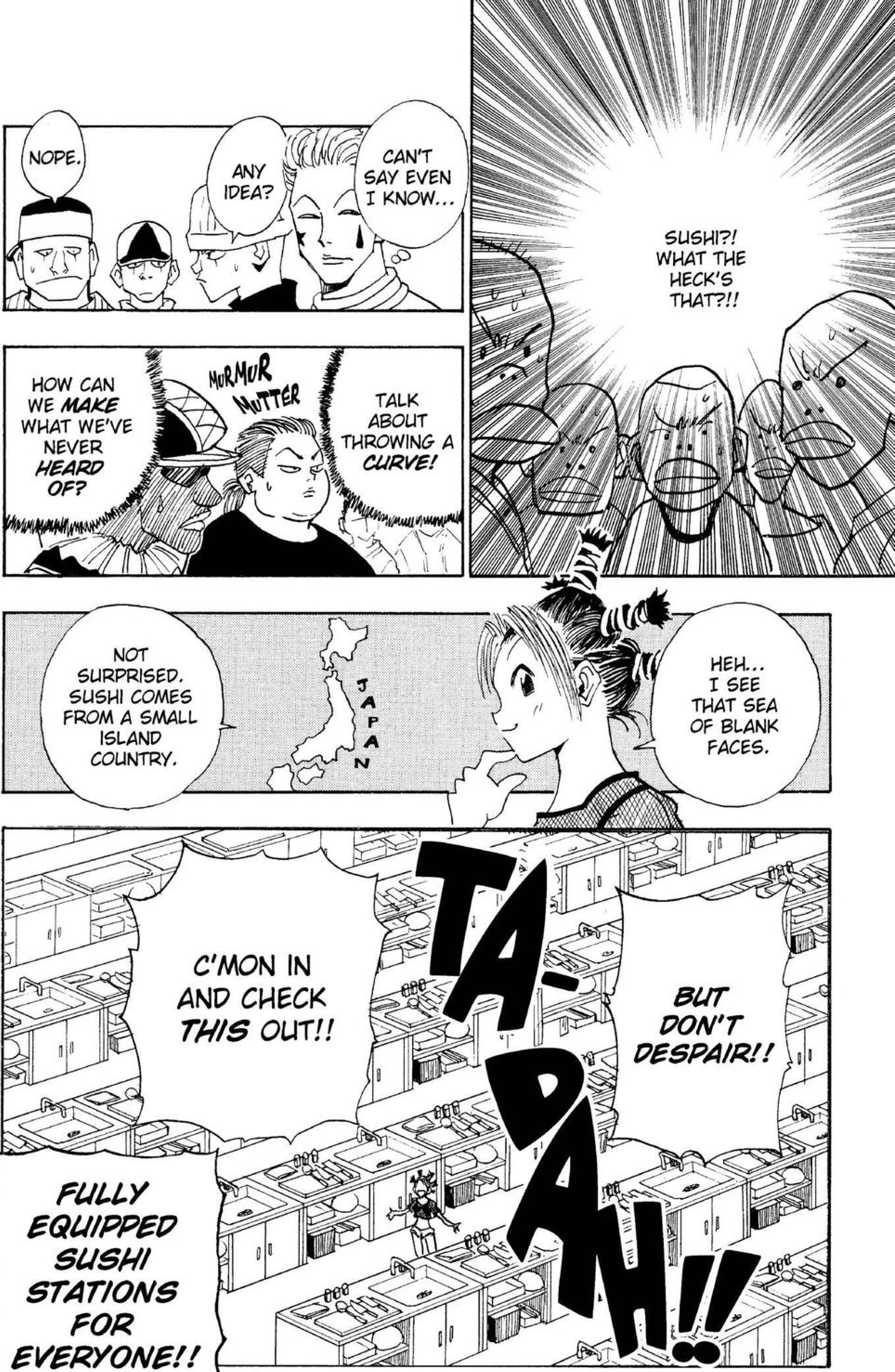
READ THIS WAY


HUNTERS REALLY ARE *AMAZING*, AREN'T THEY!
IN A WAY...
HE'D SURE ACE AN EATING CONTEST!
THIS DOESN'T MAKE *SENSE!*
HE *ATE FAR MORE* THAN HE COULD *POSSIBLY HOLD!!*
DON'T THINK ABOUT IT *TOO* HARD.
403
GLUTTON! YOU JUST *WOLFED* 'EM ALL DOWN...
...WITHOUT JUDGING THEIR *QUALITY?!*
MY *STOMACH* WAS *REALLY EMPTY!*
ANYWAY, WE'VE NARROWED DOWN THE FIELD A FAIR BIT.
YOU'RE HOPELESS.
GOURMET HUNTERS SHOULD HAVE *DISCERNING* TASTEBUDS.
FWISH
AH WELL, SO IT GOES.
BOOONG
THE ROAST PIG ROUND IS OVER!!
SEVENTY APPLICANTS PASS!!

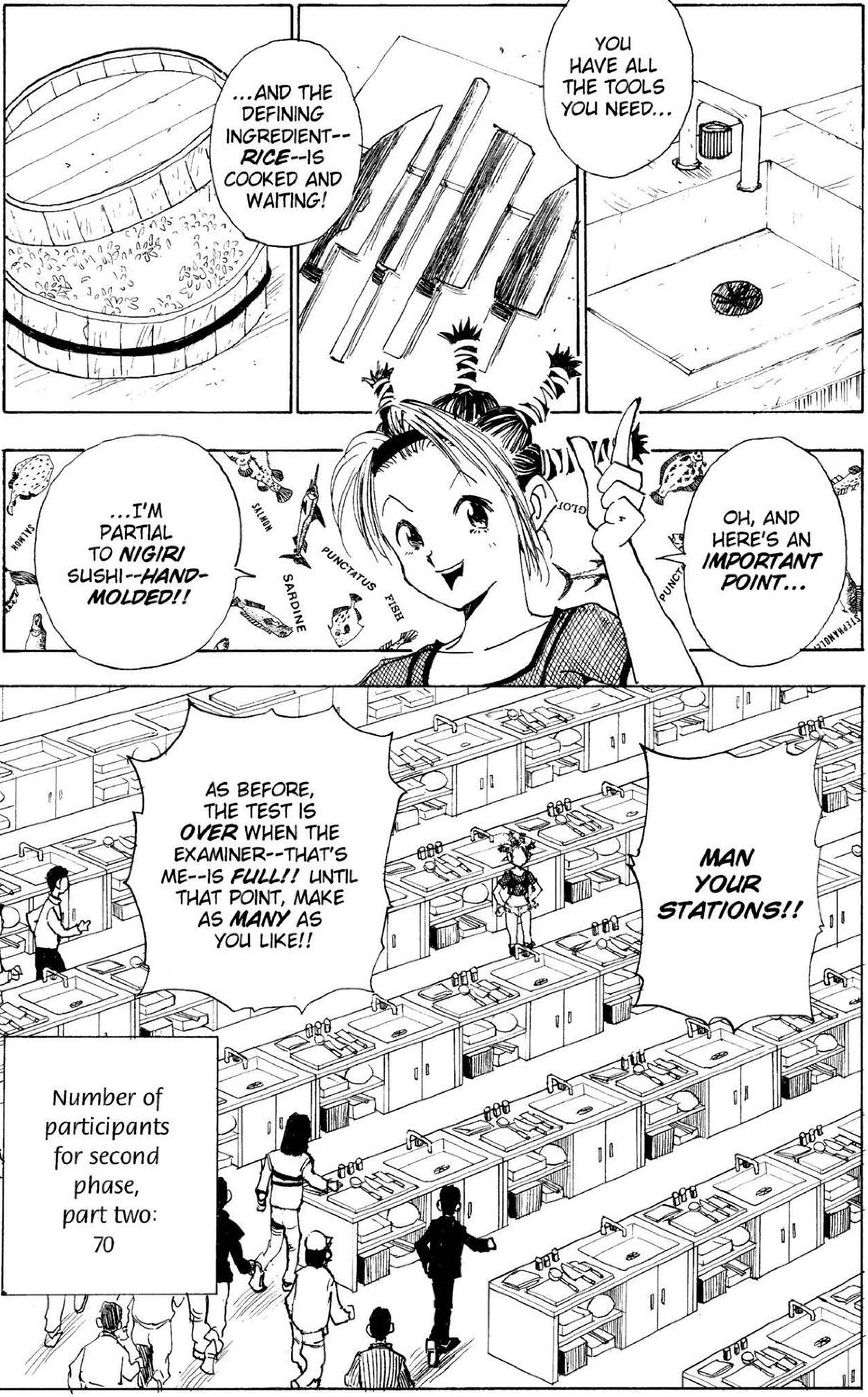

SEVENTY...
...NOT BAD AT ALL.
TRUE, KILLING A GREAT STAMP IS SIMPLE-- JUST A HEAVY BLOW TO THE HEAD.
BUT THE BLOW MUST BE PRECISE, AND THAT REQUIRES COURAGE, DECISION-MAKING SKILLS, AND ATHLETICISM.
OF COURSE, MENCHI'S UP NEXT...
...AND SHE'S ***VERY*** HARD TO PLEASE.
Menchi, the Gourmet Hunter!!
One of the world's most prominent chefs and a true epicure, her dishes reflect her artistry and sophistication!
She has a voracious appetite for new dining experiences, and demands utmost satisfaction from each one!
Her contributions to culinary culture have been invaluable! This, at the age of only 21, has earned her the title of *Single-Star Hunter!!
BE AWARE THAT, UNLIKE BUHARA...
...I CAN BE A VERY ***HARSH*** CRITIC!

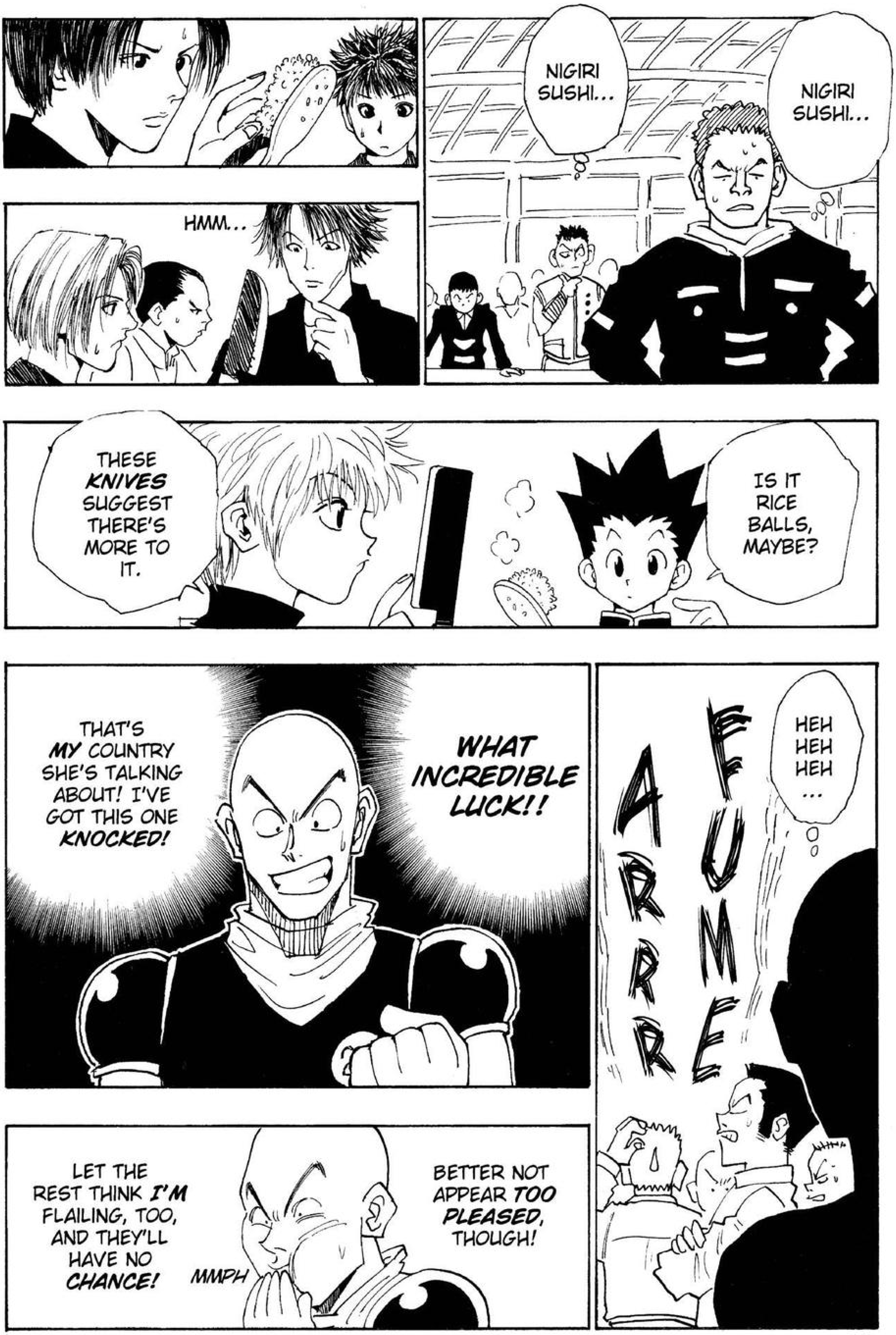
*Single-Star Hunter is the rating given to a Hunter with many notable achievements in a single field.


SECOND PHASE, PART TWO...
...AND *MY* DISH IS--
TA-DAH!!
--SUSHI!!

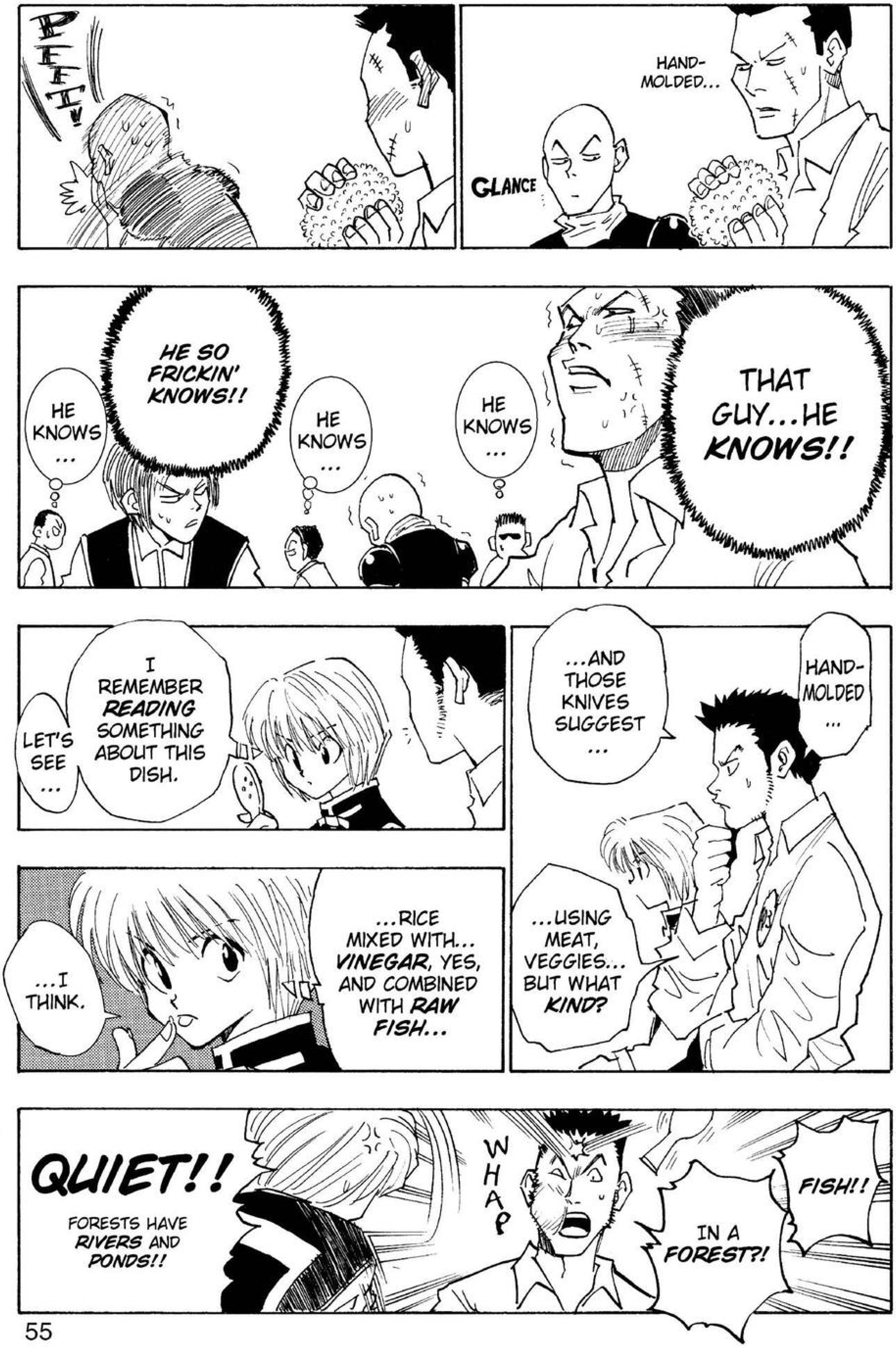

SUSHI?! WHAT THE HECK'S THAT?!!
CAN'T SAY EVEN I KNOW...
ANY IDEA?
NOPE.
TALK ABOUT THROWING A *CURVE!*
MURMUR MUTTER
HOW CAN WE *MAKE* WHAT WE'VE NEVER *HEARD* OF?
HEH... I SEE THAT SEA OF BLANK FACES.
JAPAN
NOT SURPRISED. SUSHI COMES FROM A SMALL ISLAND COUNTRY.
BUT DON'T DESPAIR!!
TA-DAH!!
C'MON IN AND CHECK *THIS* OUT!!
FULLY EQUIPPED SUSHI STATIONS FOR EVERYONE!!

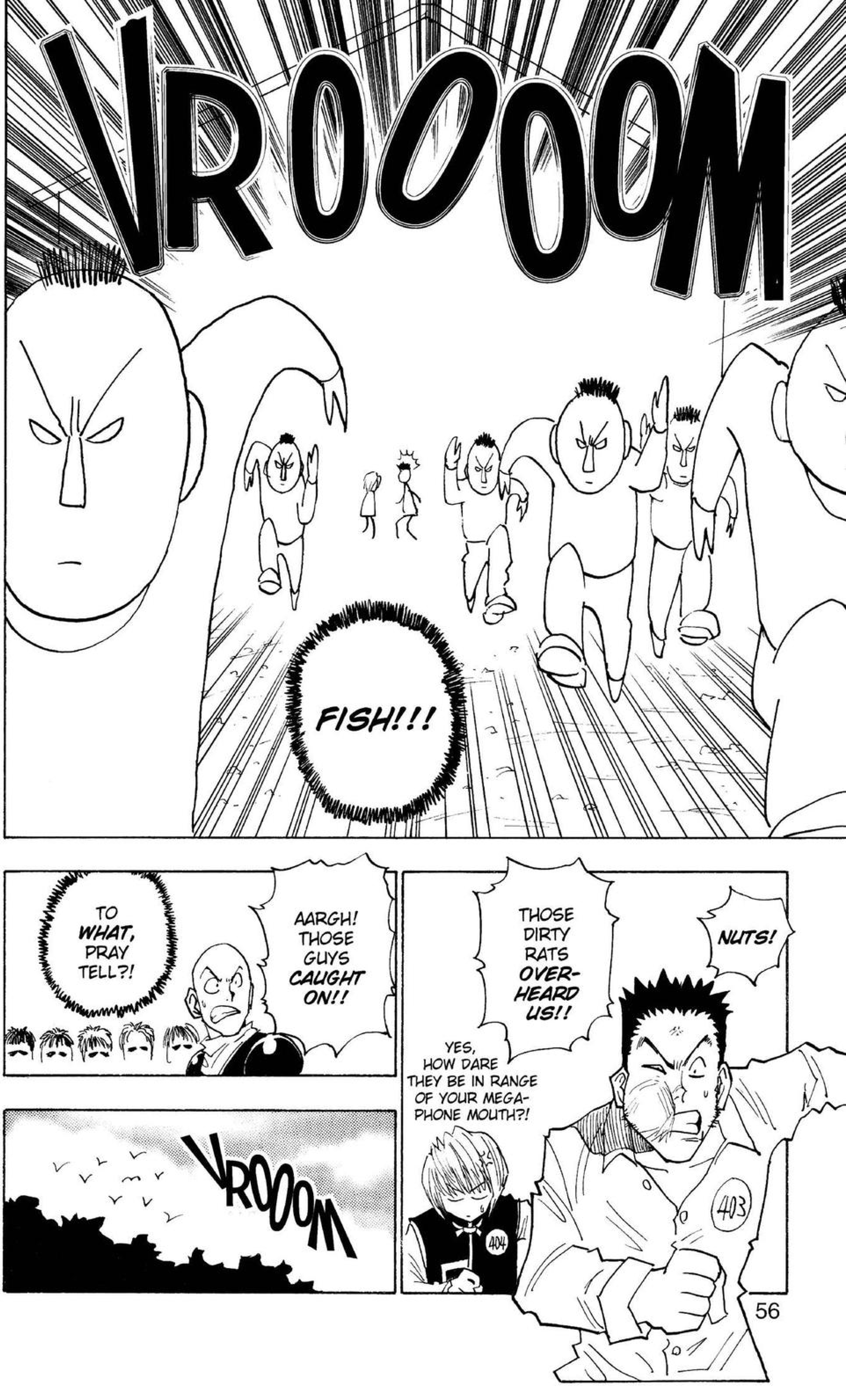
READ THIS WAY


YOU HAVE ALL THE TOOLS YOU NEED...
...AND THE DEFINING INGREDIENT--*RICE*--IS COOKED AND WAITING!
OH, AND HERE'S AN *IMPORTANT POINT*...
...I'M PARTIAL TO *NIGIRI* SUSHI--*HAND-MOLDED!!*
SALMON
SALMON
PUNCTATUS
SARDINE
FISH
MAN YOUR STATIONS!!
AS BEFORE, THE TEST IS *OVER* WHEN THE EXAMINER--THAT'S ME--IS *FULL!!* UNTIL THAT POINT, MAKE AS *MANY* AS YOU LIKE!!
Number of participants for second phase, part two: 70

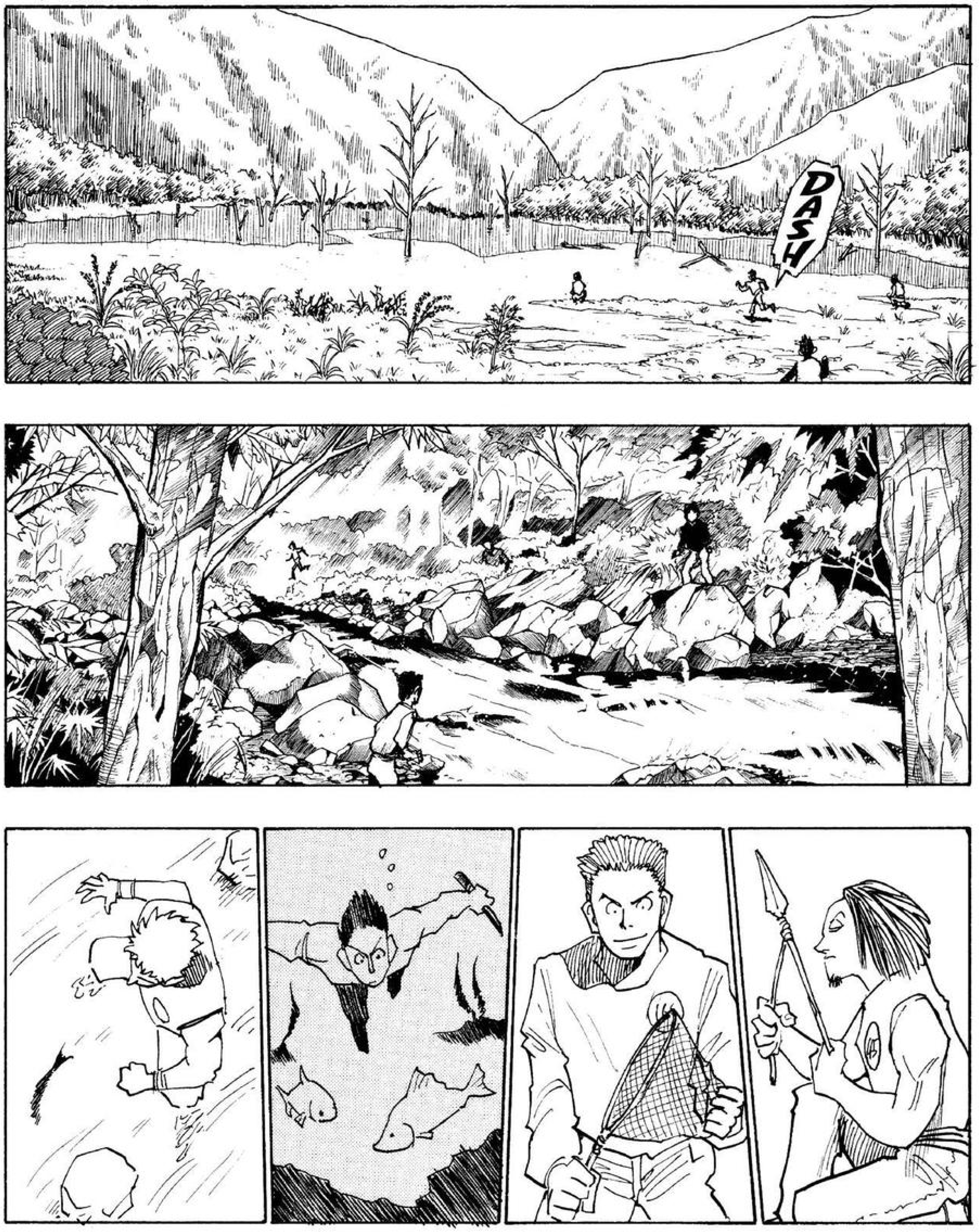

NIGIRI SUSHI...
NIGIRI SUSHI...
HMM...
IS IT RICE BALLS, MAYBE?
THESE KNIVES SUGGEST THERE'S MORE TO IT.
HEH HEH HEH...
FUME
ARRR
WHAT INCREDIBLE LUCK!!
THAT'S MY COUNTRY SHE'S TALKING ABOUT! I'VE GOT THIS ONE KNOCKED!
BETTER NOT APPEAR TOO PLEASED, THOUGH!
MMPH
LET THE REST THINK I'M FLAILING, TOO, AND THEY'LL HAVE NO CHANCE!

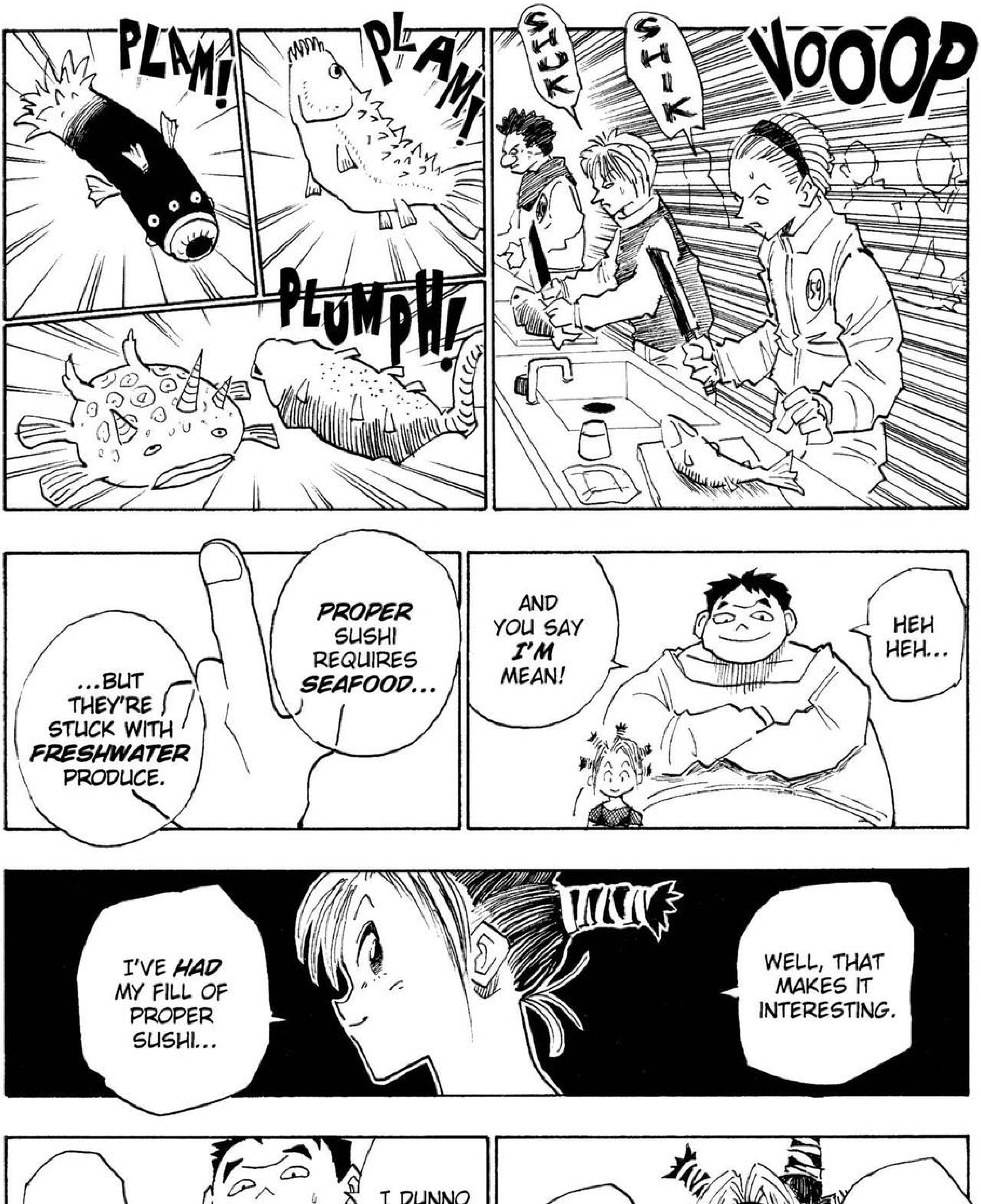
READ THIS WAY

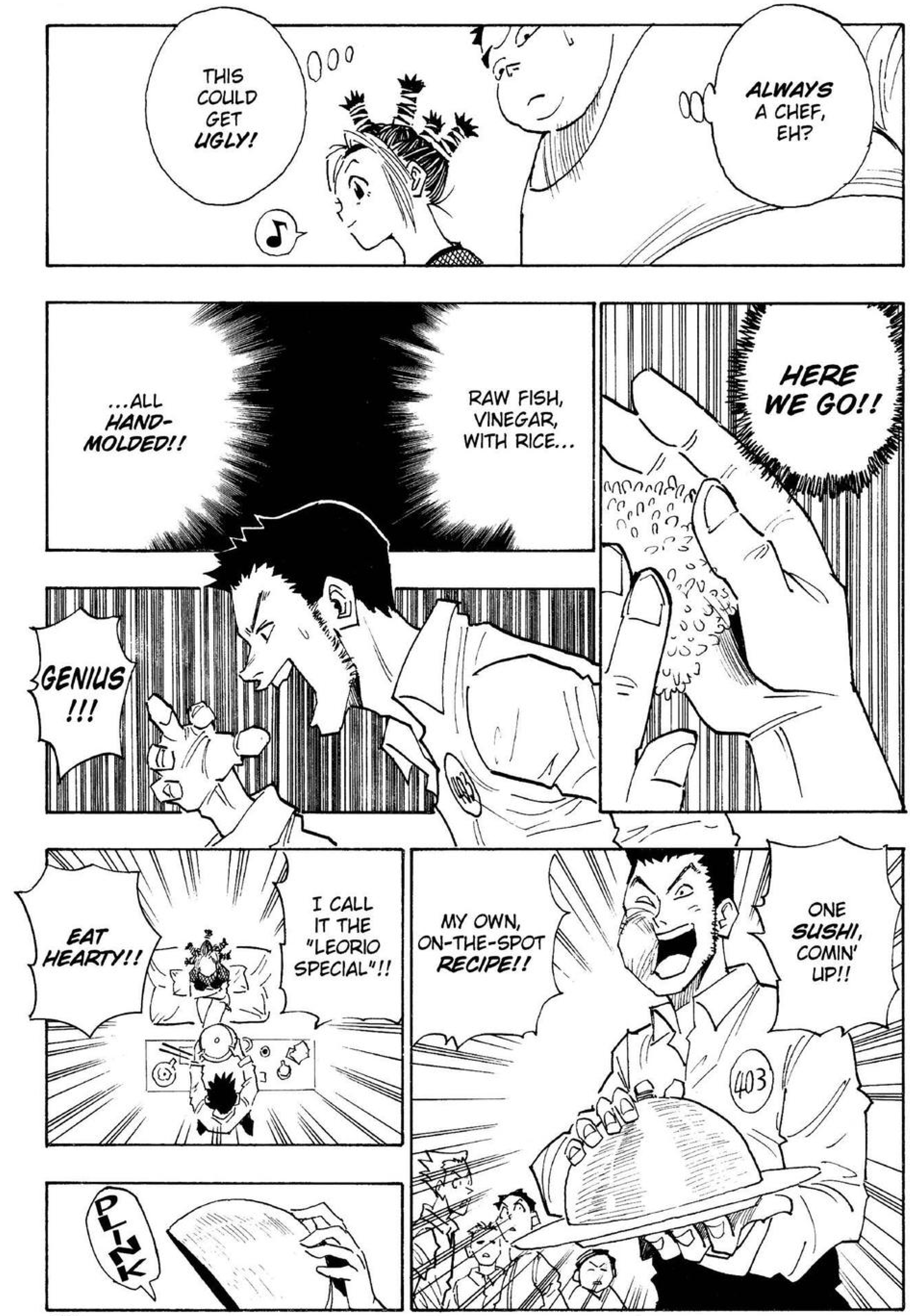

HAND-MOLDED...
GLANCE
PFFT!
THAT GUY...HE KNOWS!!
HE KNOWS...
HE KNOWS...
HE SO FRICKIN' KNOWS!!
HE KNOWS...
HAND-MOLDED...
...AND THOSE KNIVES SUGGEST...
...USING MEAT, VEGGIES... BUT WHAT KIND?
I REMEMBER READING SOMETHING ABOUT THIS DISH.
LET'S SEE...
...RICE MIXED WITH... VINEGAR, YES, AND COMBINED WITH RAW FISH...
...I THINK.
FISH!!
IN A FOREST?!
WHAP
QUIET!!
FORESTS HAVE RIVERS AND PONDS!!

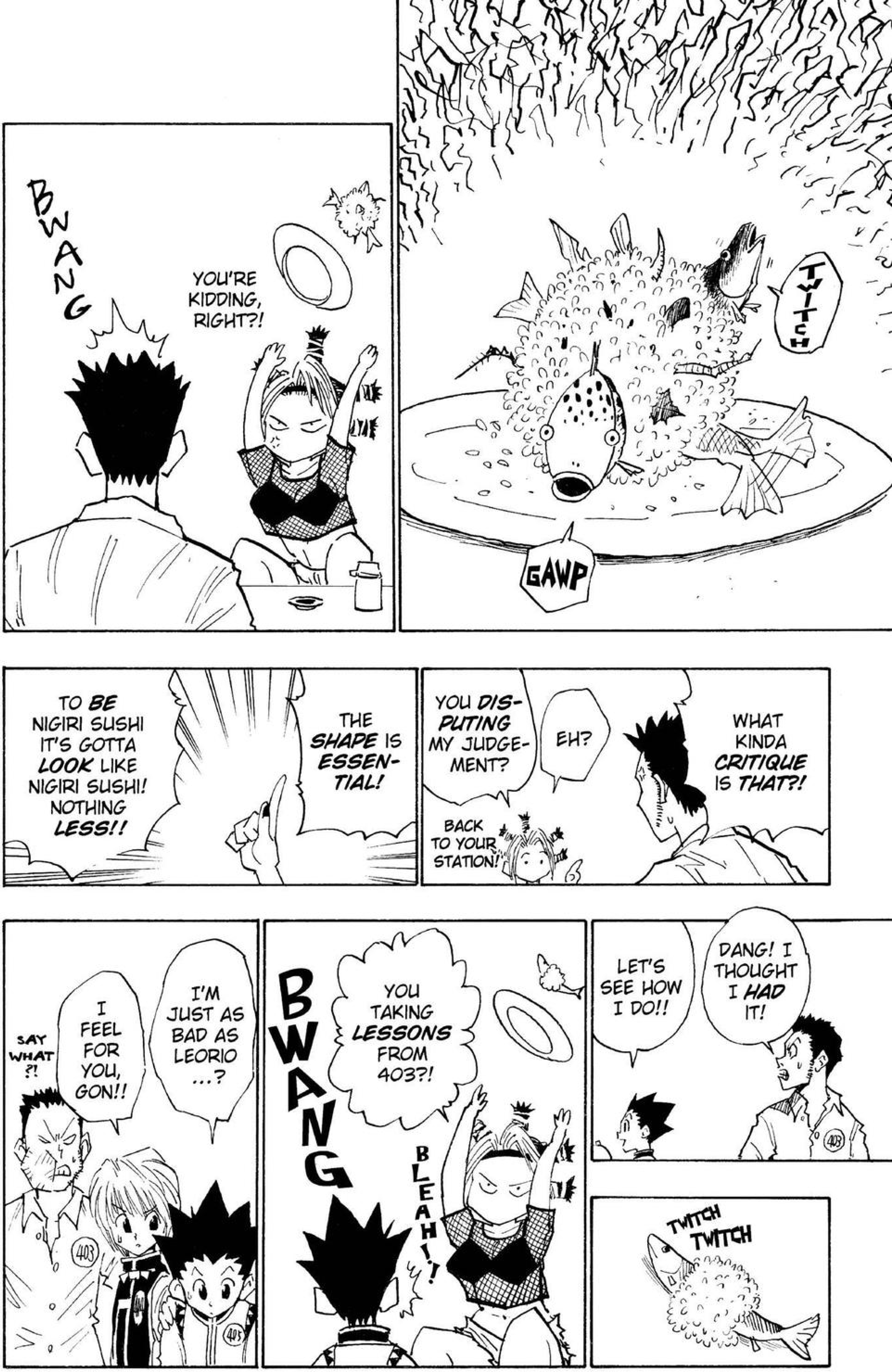

VROOOM
FISH!!!
NUTS!
THOSE DIRTY RATS OVERHEARD US!!
YES, HOW DARE THEY BE IN RANGE OF YOUR MEGAPHONE MOUTH?!
403
404
AARGH! THOSE GUYS CAUGHT ON!!
TO WHAT, PRAY TELL?!
VROOOM

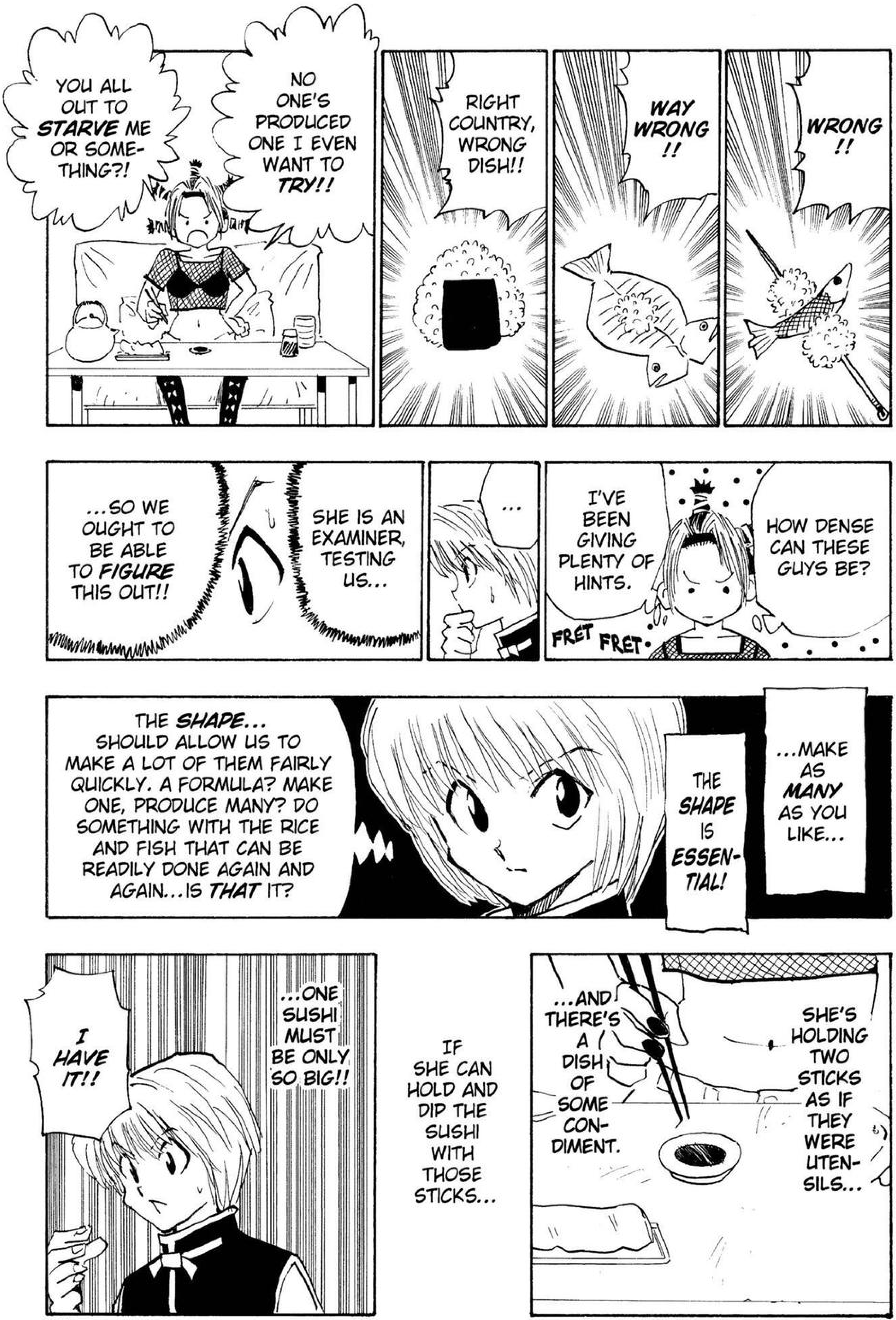
READ THIS WAY

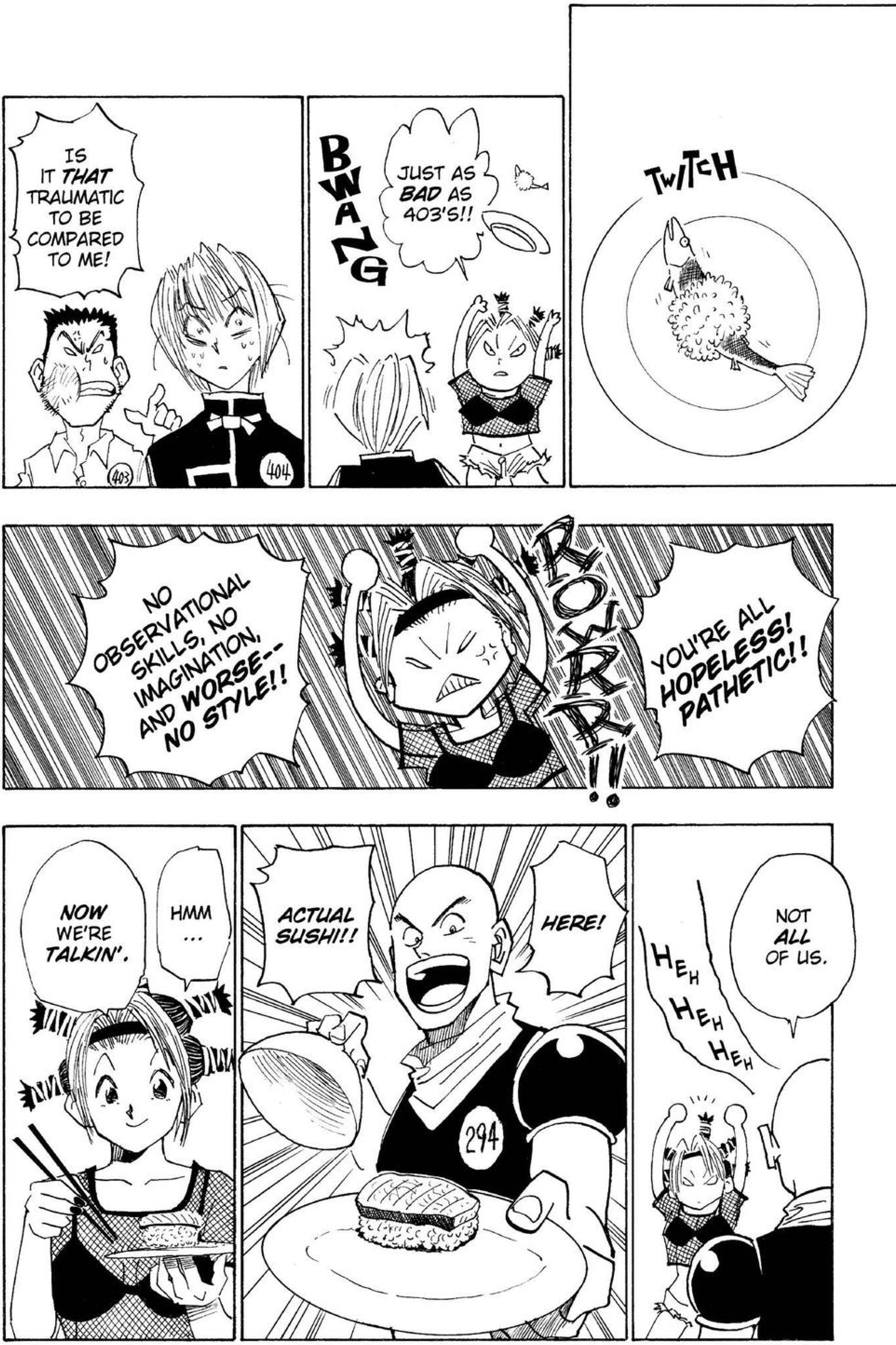

DASH
VROOOSH

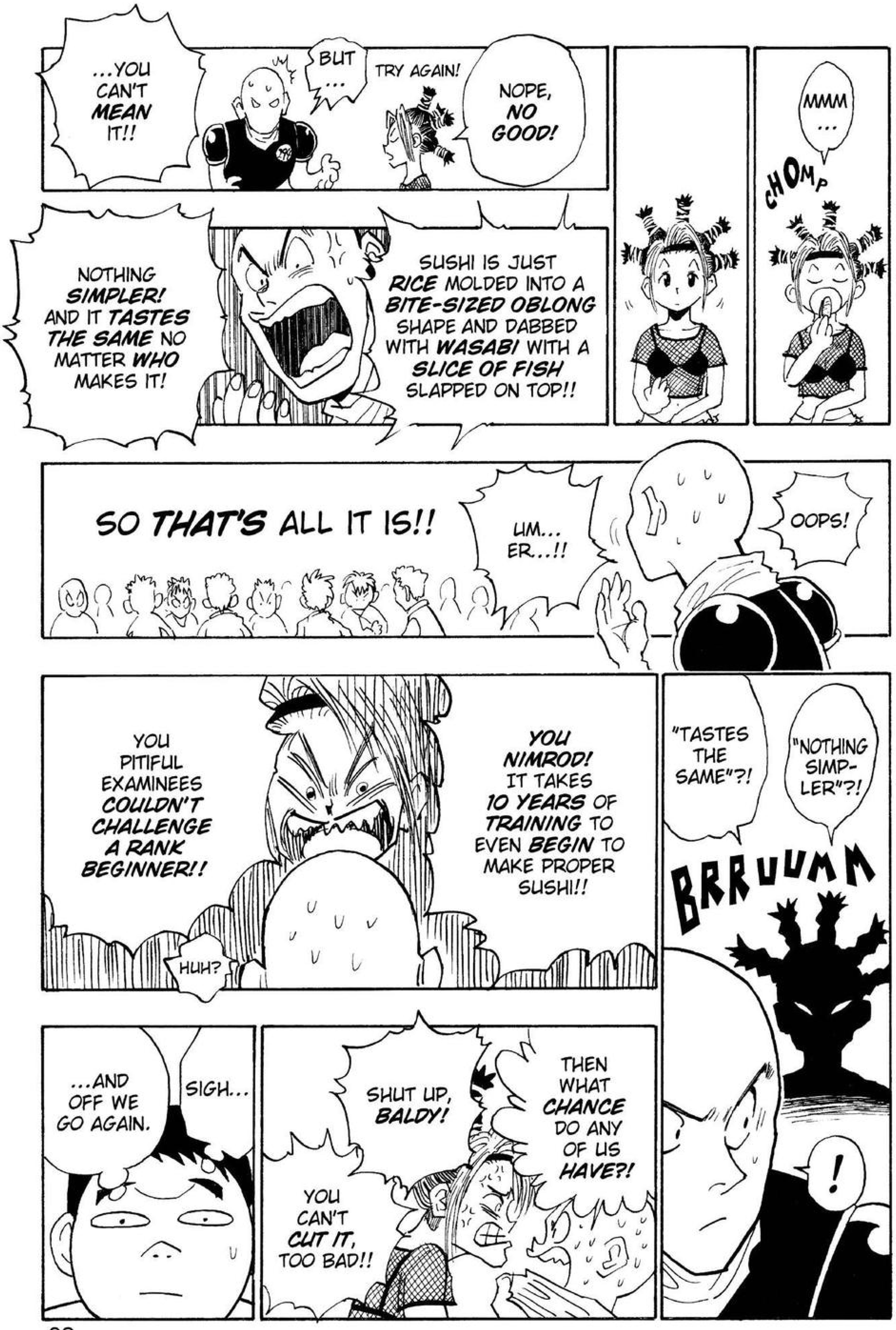

SHIK
SHIK
VOOOP
PLAM!
PLAM!
PLUMPH!
HEH HEH…
AND YOU SAY I'M MEAN!
PROPER SUSHI REQUIRES SEAFOOD…
…BUT THEY'RE STUCK WITH FRESHWATER PRODUCE.
WELL, THAT MAKES IT INTERESTING.
I'VE HAD MY FILL OF PROPER SUSHI…
…SO I'M KEEN TO SEE WHAT THESE GUYS COME UP WITH.
I'M MORE A CHEF THAN AN EXAMINER, ANYWAY.
I DUNNO IF THAT'S SMART…
HUH?
NEVER MIND…

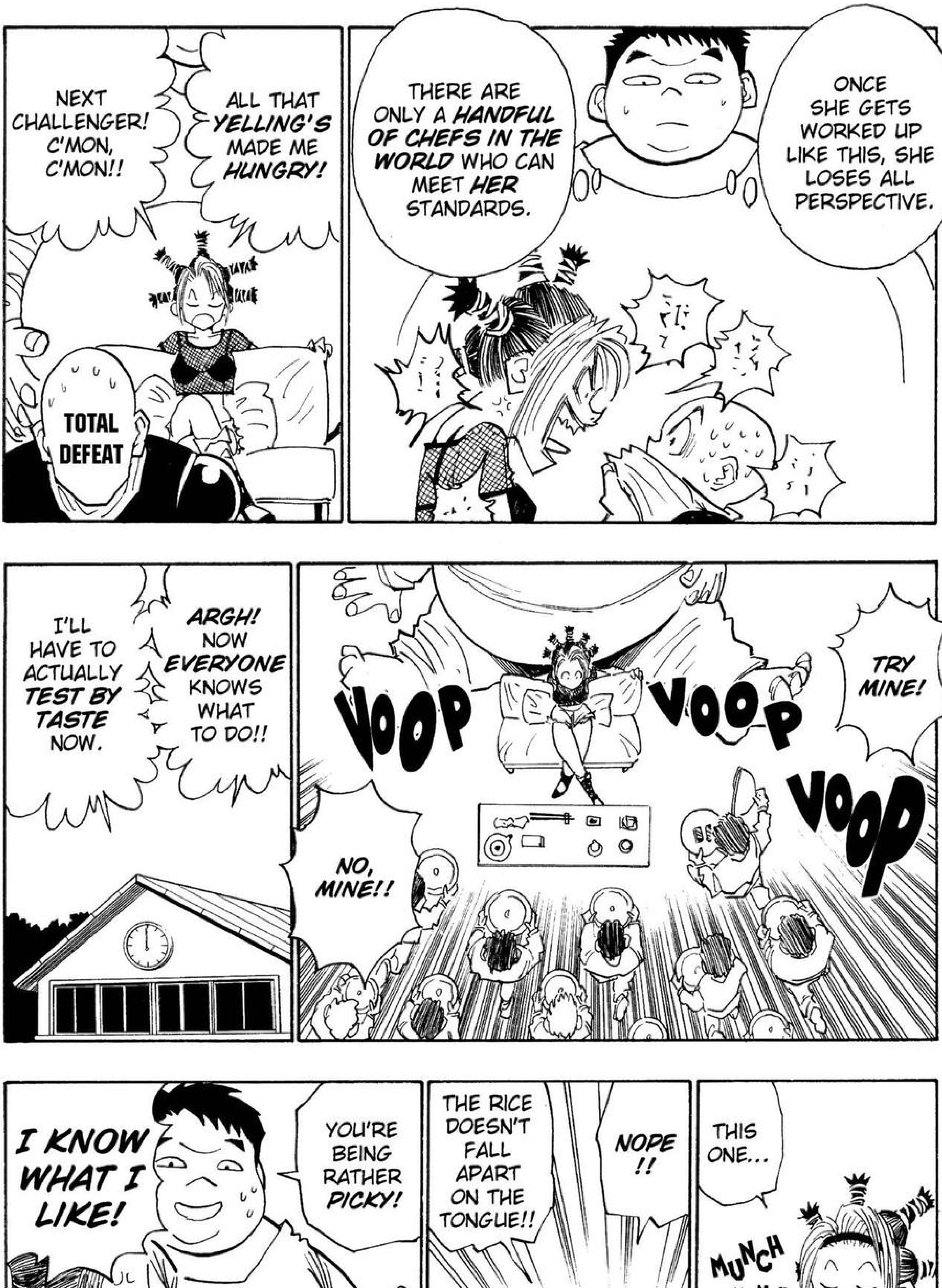

ALWAYS A CHEF, EH?
THIS COULD GET UGLY!
♪
HERE WE GO!!
RAW FISH, VINEGAR, WITH RICE...
...ALL HAND-MOLDED!!
GENIUS!!!
ONE SUSHI, COMIN' UP!!
MY OWN, ON-THE-SPOT RECIPE!!
403
I CALL IT THE "LEORIO SPECIAL"!!
EAT HEARTY!!
PLINK

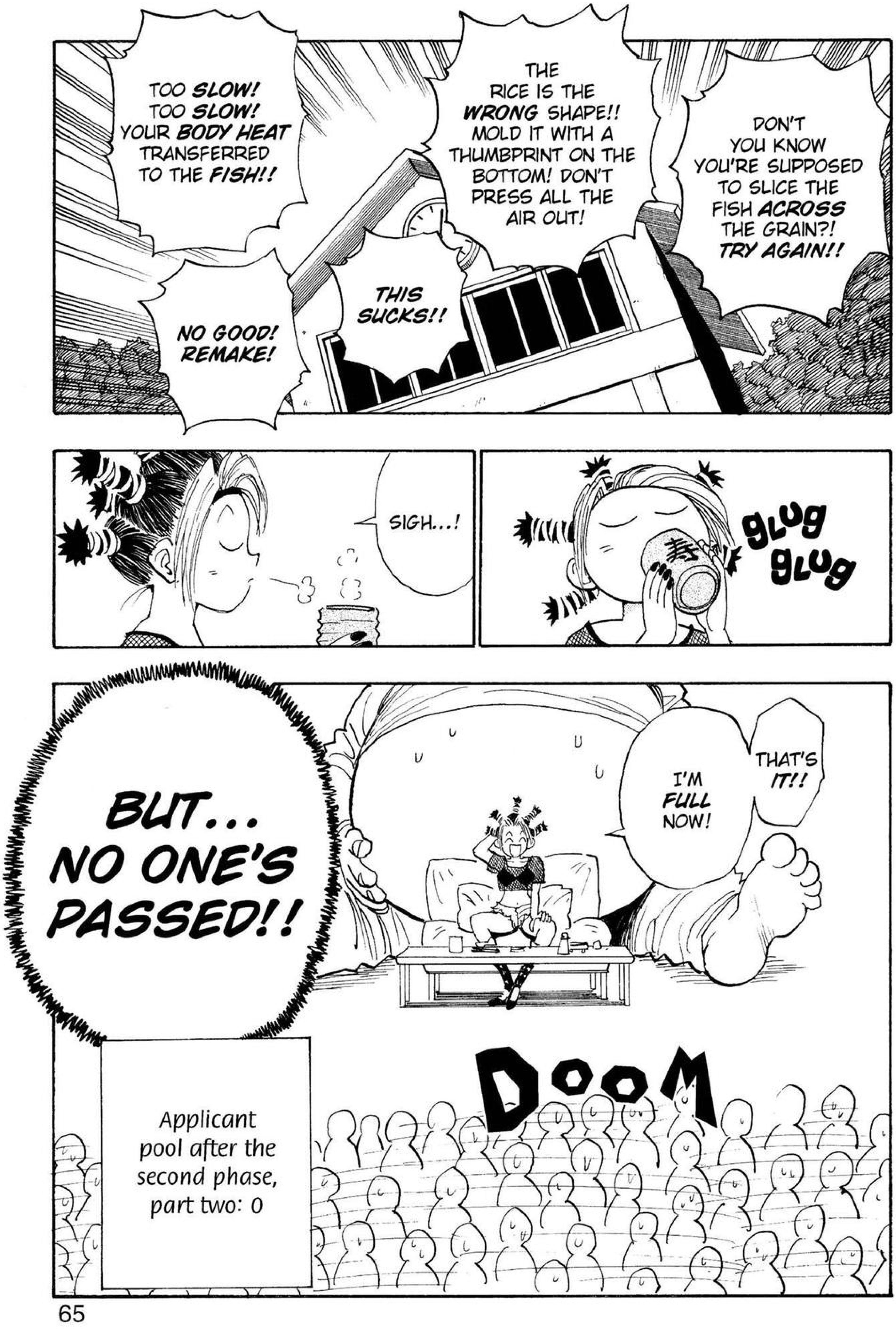

TWITCH
GAWP
BWANG
YOU'RE KIDDING, RIGHT?!
WHAT KINDA CRITIQUE IS THAT?!
EH?
YOU DISPUTING MY JUDGEMENT?
BACK TO YOUR STATION!
THE SHAPE IS ESSENTIAL!
TO BE NIGIRI SUSHI IT'S GOTTA LOOK LIKE NIGIRI SUSHI! NOTHING LESS!!
DANG! I THOUGHT I HAD IT!
LET'S SEE HOW I DO!!
TWITCH TWITCH
YOU TAKING LESSONS FROM 403?!
BWANG
BLEAH!!
I'M JUST AS BAD AS LEORIO ...?
I FEEL FOR YOU, GON!!
SAY WHAT?!

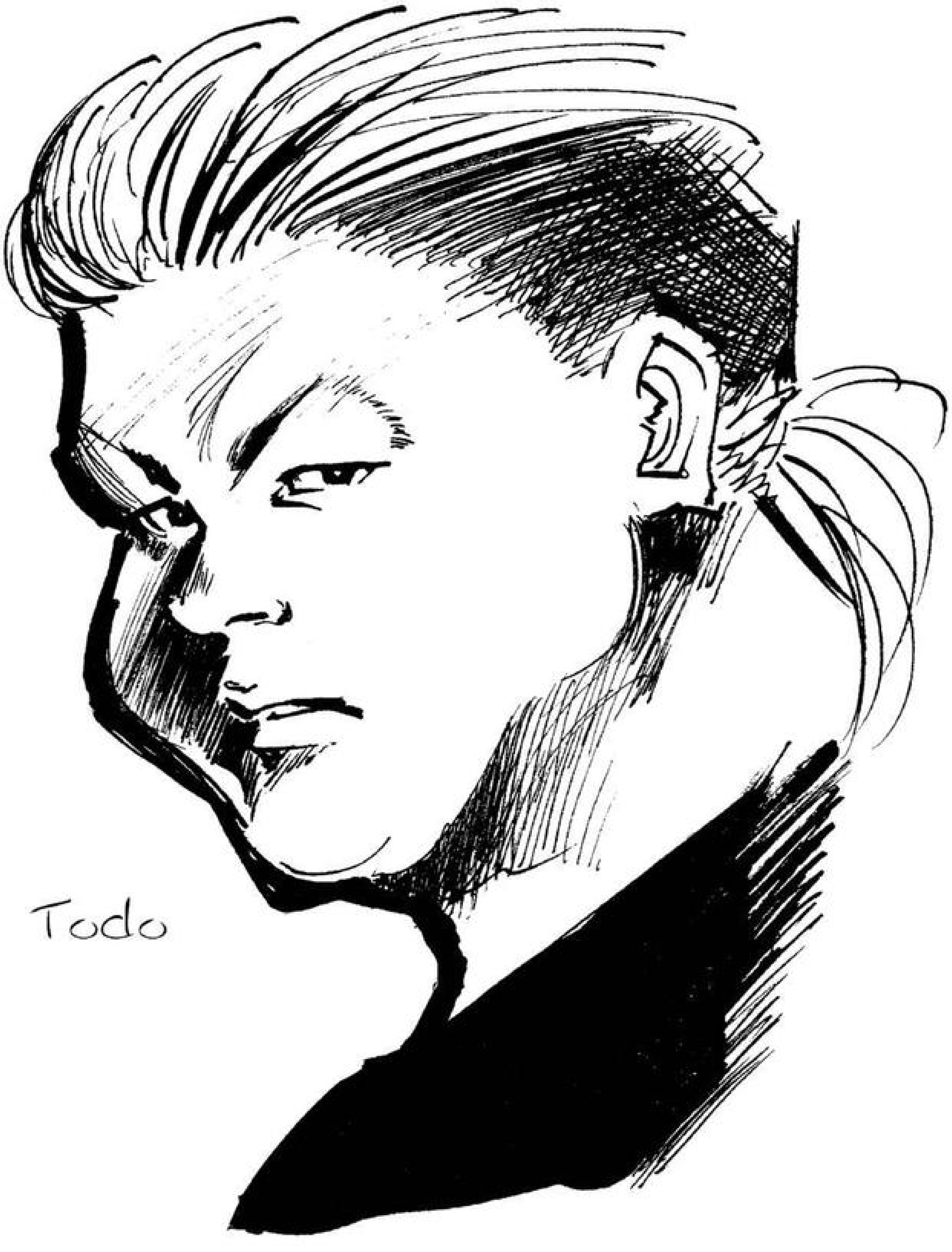

WRONG !!
WAY WRONG !!
RIGHT COUNTRY, WRONG DISH!!
NO ONE'S PRODUCED ONE I EVEN WANT TO TRY!!
YOU ALL OUT TO STARVE ME OR SOMETHING?!
HOW DENSE CAN THESE GUYS BE?
I'VE BEEN GIVING PLENTY OF HINTS.
FRET FRET
...
SHE IS AN EXAMINER, TESTING US...
...SO WE OUGHT TO BE ABLE TO FIGURE THIS OUT!!
...MAKE AS MANY AS YOU LIKE...
THE SHAPE IS ESSENTIAL!
THE SHAPE... SHOULD ALLOW US TO MAKE A LOT OF THEM FAIRLY QUICKLY. A FORMULA? MAKE ONE, PRODUCE MANY? DO SOMETHING WITH THE RICE AND FISH THAT CAN BE READILY DONE AGAIN AND AGAIN...IS THAT IT?
SHE'S HOLDING TWO STICKS AS IF THEY WERE UTENSILS...
...AND THERE'S A DISH OF SOME CONDIMENT.
IF SHE CAN HOLD AND DIP THE SUSHI WITH THOSE STICKS...
...ONE SUSHI MUST BE ONLY SO BIG!!
I HAVE IT!!


TWITCH
BWANG
JUST AS BAD AS 403'S!!
IS IT THAT TRAUMATIC TO BE COMPARED TO ME!
403
404
YOU'RE ALL HOPELESS! PATHETIC!!
ROAR!!
NO OBSERVATIONAL SKILLS, NO IMAGINATION, AND WORSE--NO STYLE!!
NOT ALL OF US.
HEH HEH HEH
HERE!
ACTUAL SUSHI!!
294
HMM ...
NOW WE'RE TALKIN'.


MMM...
CHOMP
NOPE, NO GOOD!
TRY AGAIN!
BUT...
...YOU CAN'T MEAN IT!!
SUSHI IS JUST RICE MOLDED INTO A BITE-SIZED OBLONG SHAPE AND DABBED WITH WASABI WITH A SLICE OF FISH SLAPPED ON TOP!!
NOTHING SIMPLER! AND IT TASTES THE SAME NO MATTER WHO MAKES IT!
OOPS!
UM... ER...!!
SO THAT'S ALL IT IS!!
"NOTHING SIMP-LER"?!
"TASTES THE SAME"?!
BRRUUMM
!
YOU NIMROD! IT TAKES 10 YEARS OF TRAINING TO EVEN BEGIN TO MAKE PROPER SUSHI!!
YOU PITIFUL EXAMINEES COULDN'T CHALLENGE A RANK BEGINNER!!
HUH?
THEN WHAT CHANCE DO ANY OF US HAVE?!
SHUT UP, BALDY!
YOU CAN'T CUT IT, TOO BAD!!
SIGH...
...AND OFF WE GO AGAIN.


NEXT CHALLENGER! C'MON, C'MON!!
ALL THAT YELLING'S MADE ME HUNGRY!
TOTAL DEFEAT
THERE ARE ONLY A HANDFUL OF CHEFS IN THE WORLD WHO CAN MEET HER STANDARDS.
ONCE SHE GETS WORKED UP LIKE THIS, SHE LOSES ALL PERSPECTIVE.
I'LL HAVE TO ACTUALLY TEST BY TASTE NOW.
ARGH! NOW EVERYONE KNOWS WHAT TO DO!!
VOOP
VOOP
TRY MINE!
VOOP
NO, MINE!!
I KNOW WHAT I LIKE!
YOU'RE BEING RATHER PICKY!
SNAP
THE RICE DOESN'T FALL APART ON THE TONGUE!!
NOPE!!
PHOOEY!
THIS ONE...
MUNCH MUNCH

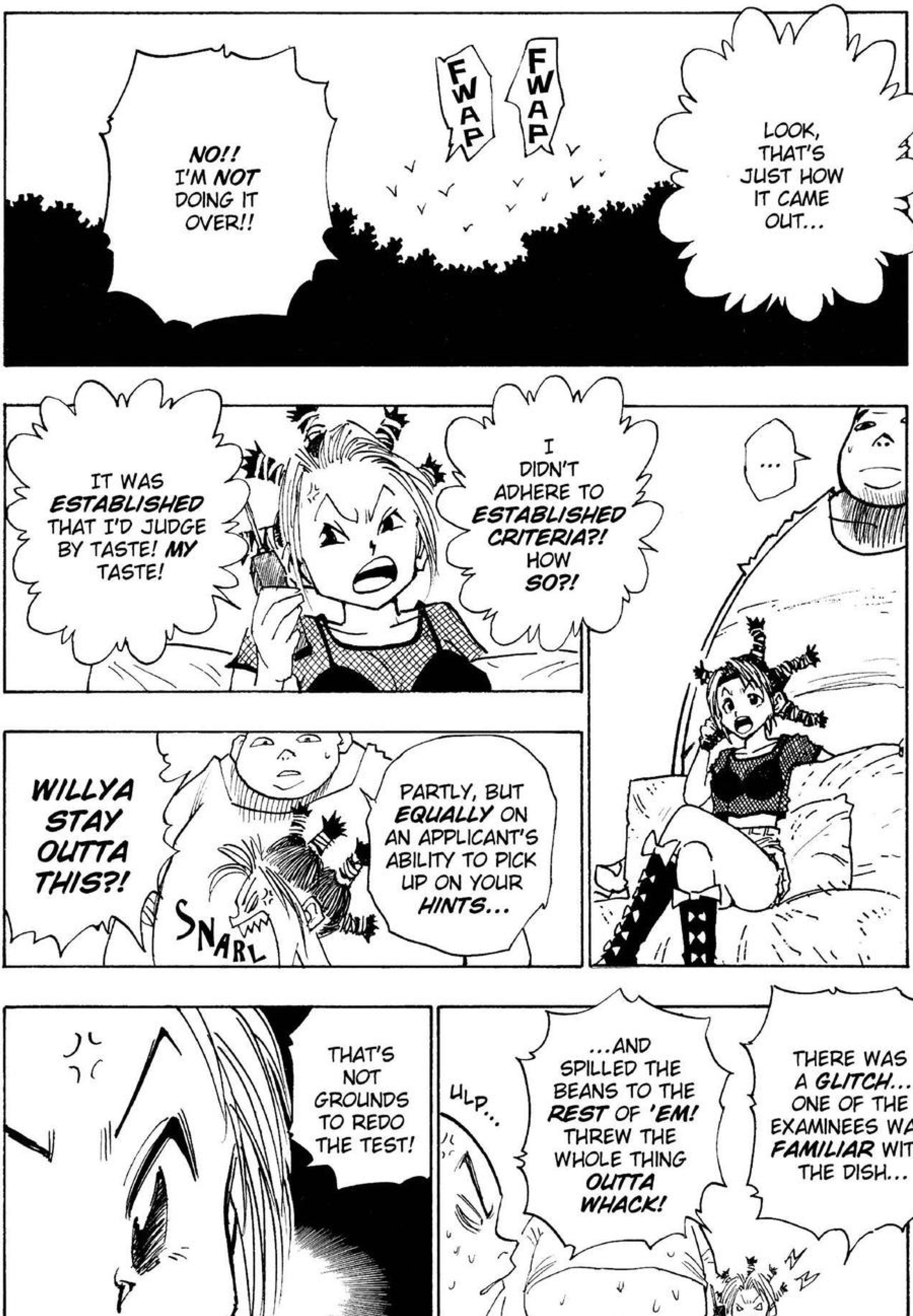

TOO SLOW! TOO SLOW! YOUR BODY HEAT TRANSFERRED TO THE FISH!!
NO GOOD! REMAKE!
THE RICE IS THE WRONG SHAPE!! MOLD IT WITH A THUMBPRINT ON THE BOTTOM! DON'T PRESS ALL THE AIR OUT!
THIS SUCKS!!
DON'T YOU KNOW YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO SLICE THE FISH ACROSS THE GRAIN?! TRY AGAIN!!
SIGH...!
GLUG GLUG
寿
THAT'S IT!!
I'M FULL NOW!
BUT... NO ONE'S PASSED!!
DOOM
Applicant pool after the second phase, part two: 0

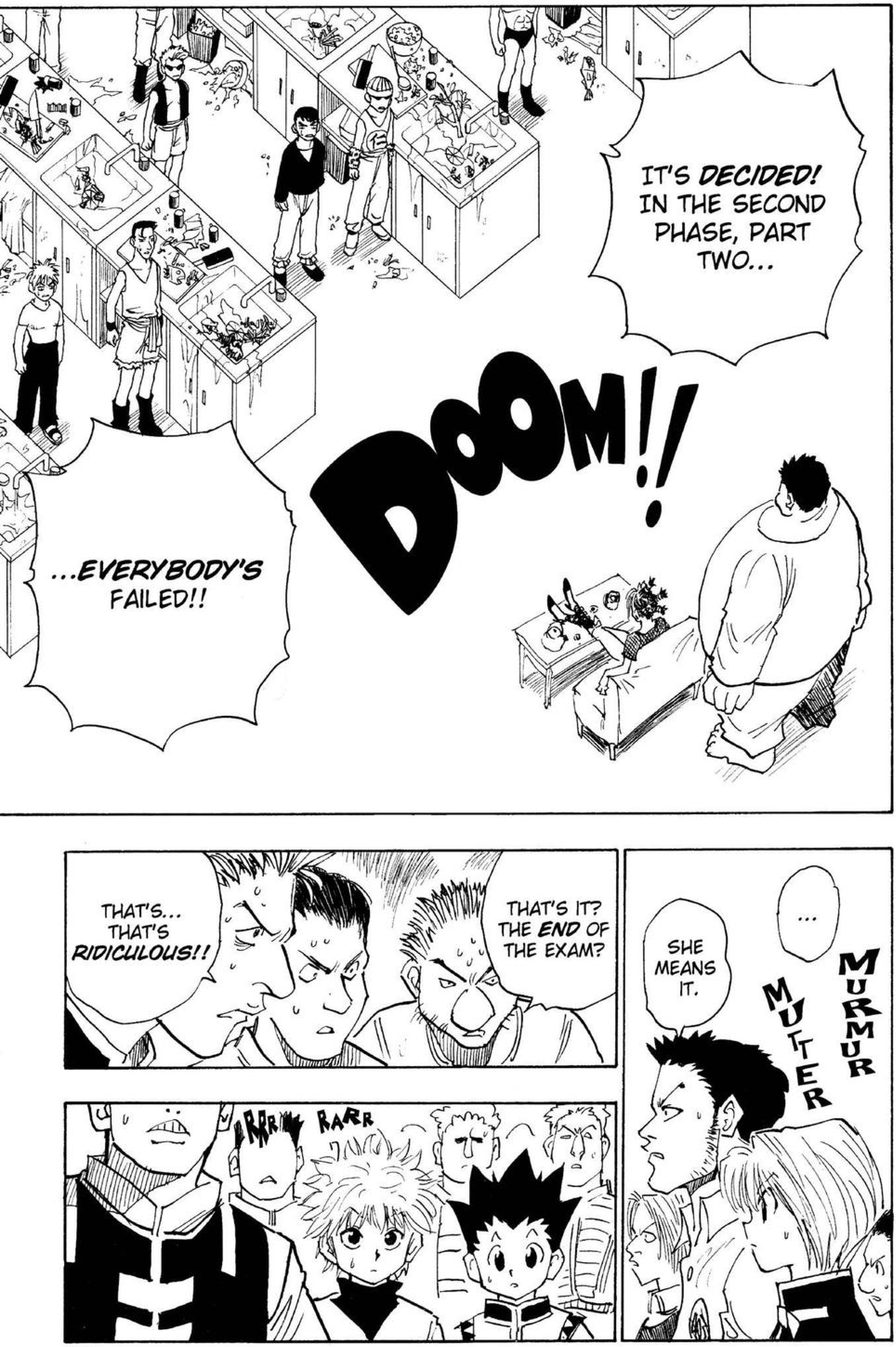

Todo

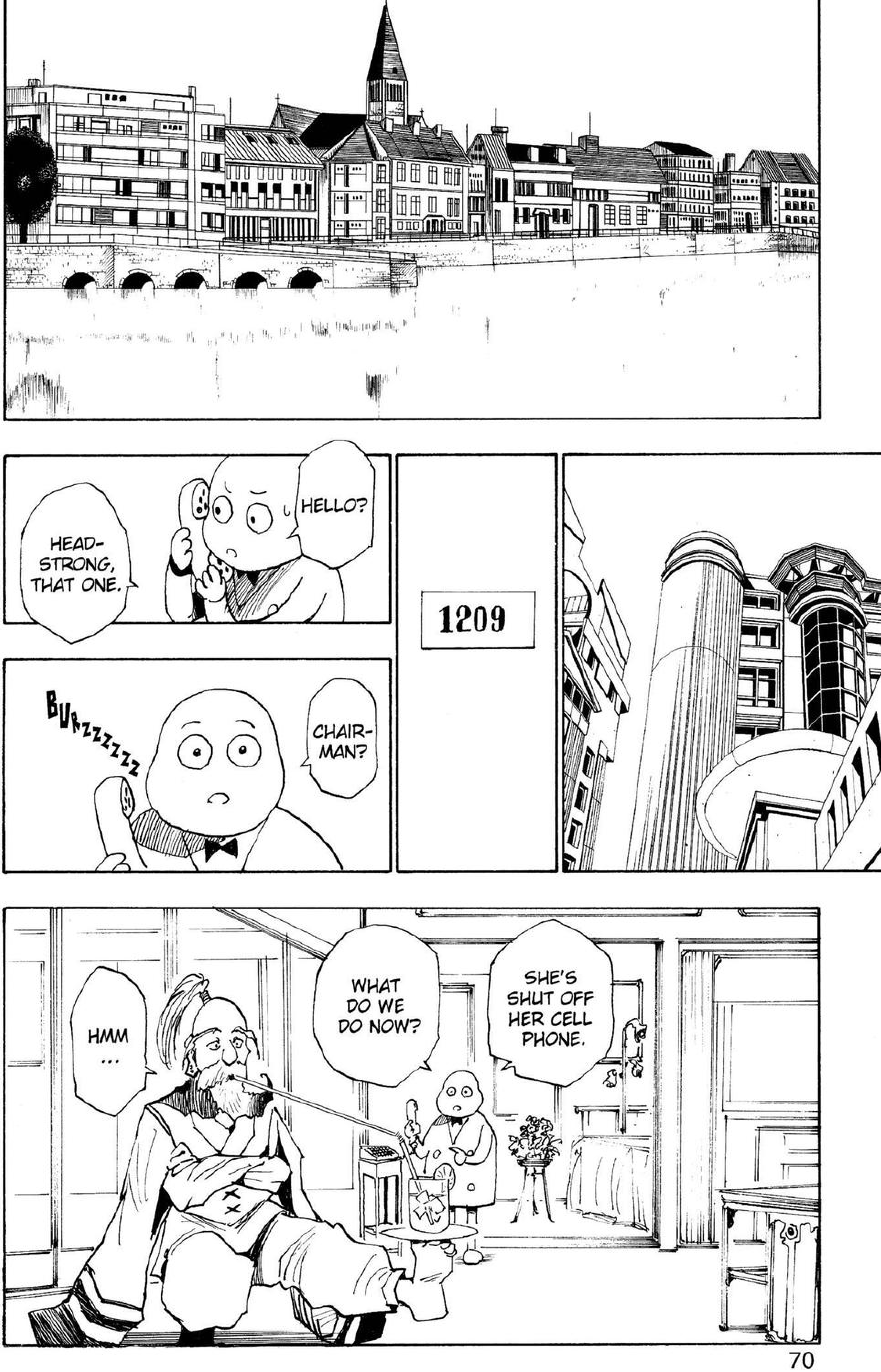
Chapter 12

The Chairman Arrives

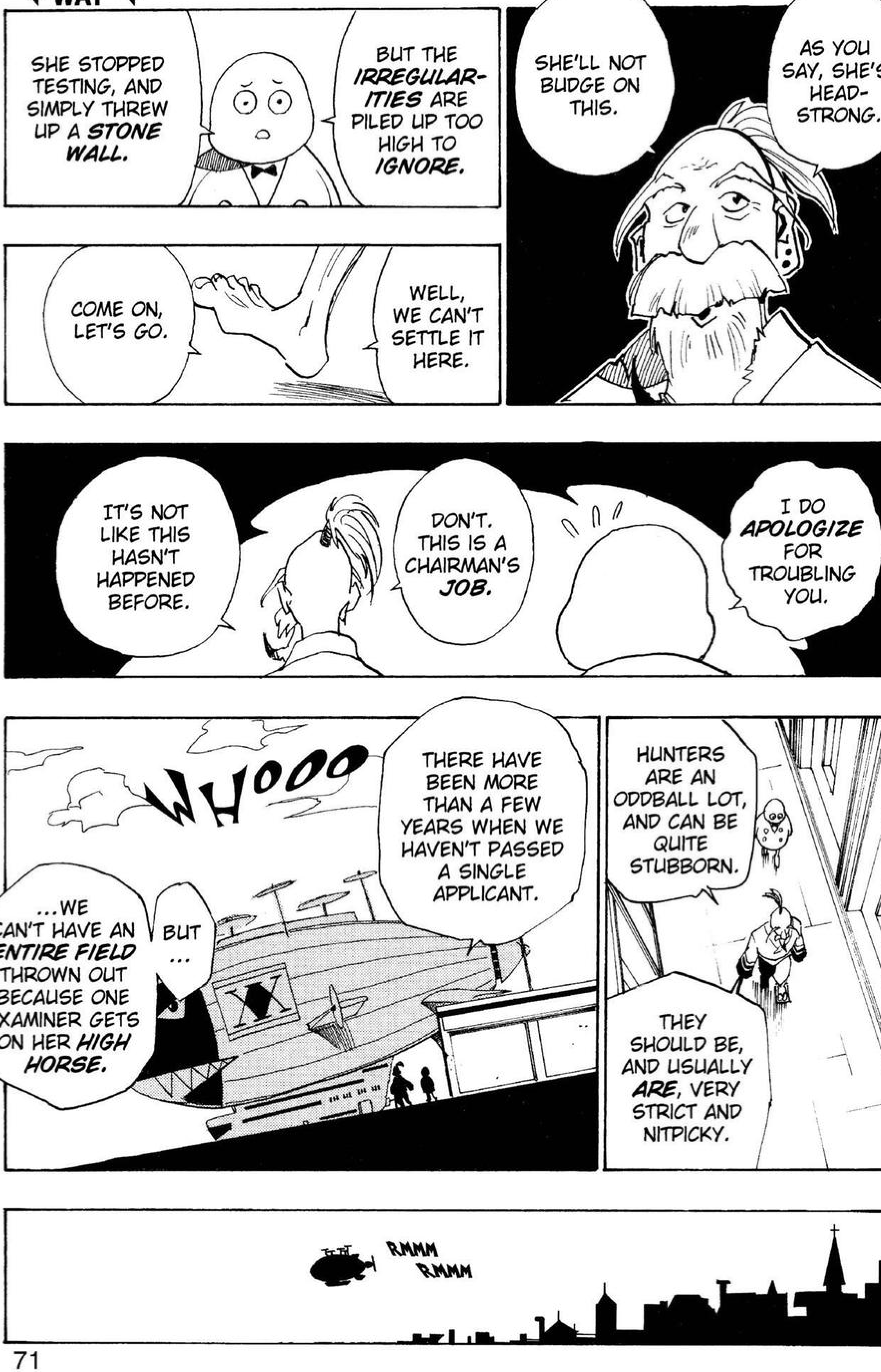
HUNTER × HUNTER
HUNTER × HUNTER

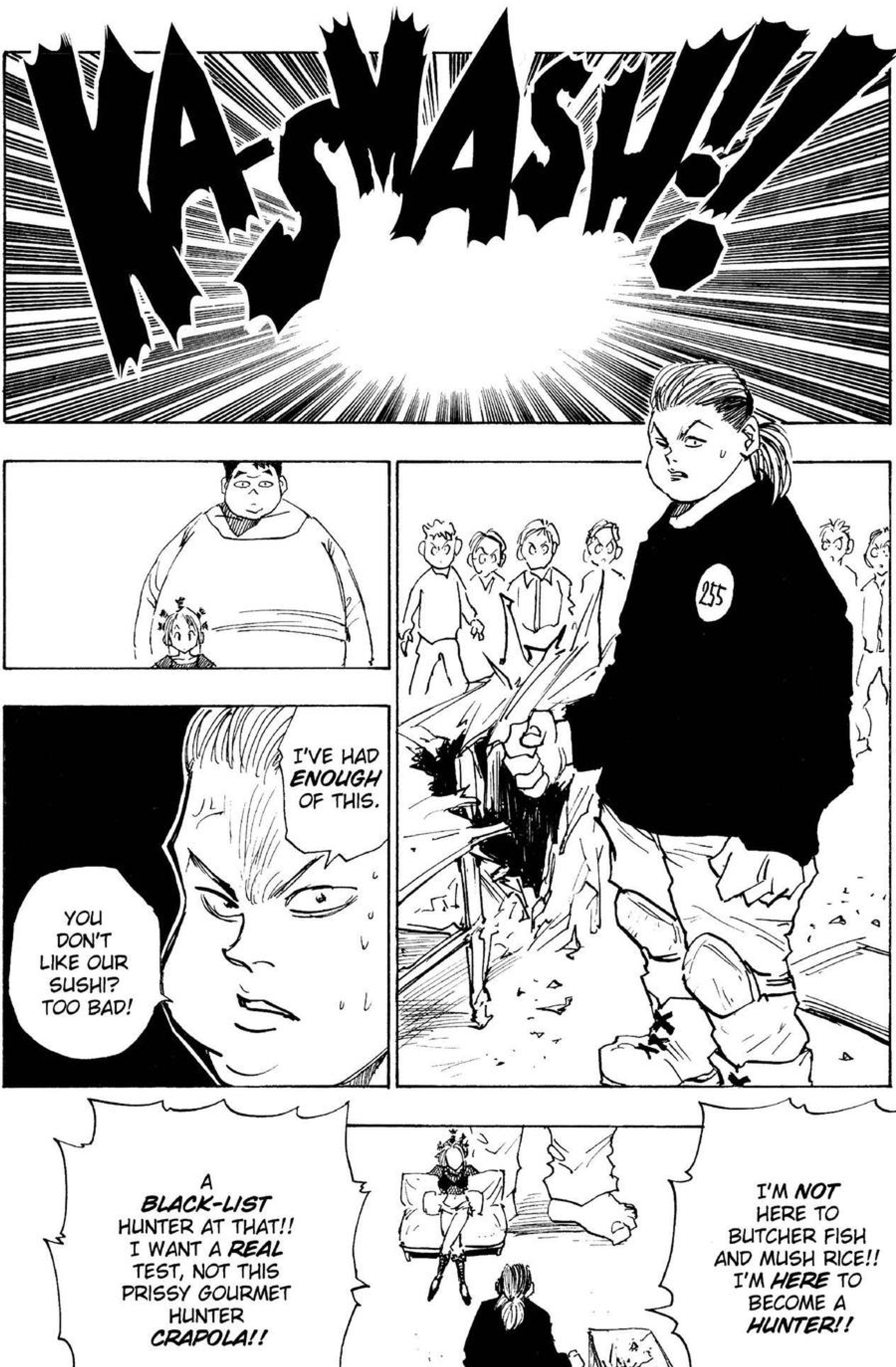

LOOK, THAT'S JUST HOW IT CAME OUT...
FWAP
FWAP
NO!! I'M NOT DOING IT OVER!!
...
I DIDN'T ADHERE TO ESTABLISHED CRITERIA?! HOW SO?!
IT WAS ESTABLISHED THAT I'D JUDGE BY TASTE! MY TASTE!
PARTLY, BUT EQUALLY ON AN APPLICANT'S ABILITY TO PICK UP ON YOUR HINTS...
SNARL
WILLYA STAY OUTTA THIS?!
THERE WAS A GLITCH... ONE OF THE EXAMINEES WAS FAMILIAR WITH THE DISH...
...AND SPILLED THE BEANS TO THE REST OF 'EM! THREW THE WHOLE THING OUTTA WHACK!
ULP...
THAT'S NOT GROUNDS TO REDO THE TEST!

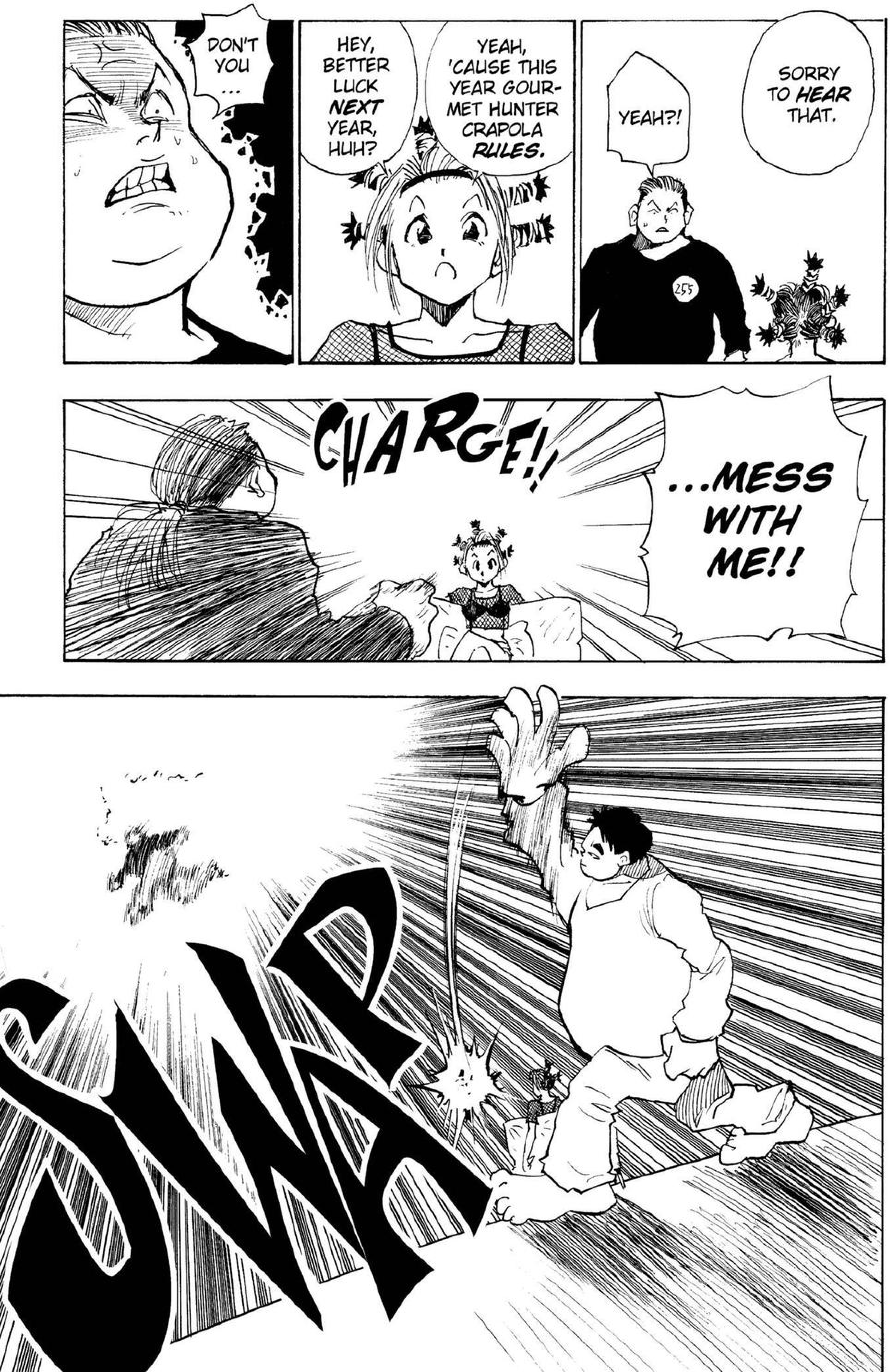

IT'S *DECIDED!* IN THE SECOND PHASE, PART TWO...
...*EVERYBODY'S* FAILED!!
DOOM!!
...
SHE MEANS IT.
MURMUR
MUTTER
THAT'S IT? THE *END* OF THE EXAM?
THAT'S... THAT'S *RIDICULOUS!!*
RARR
RARR

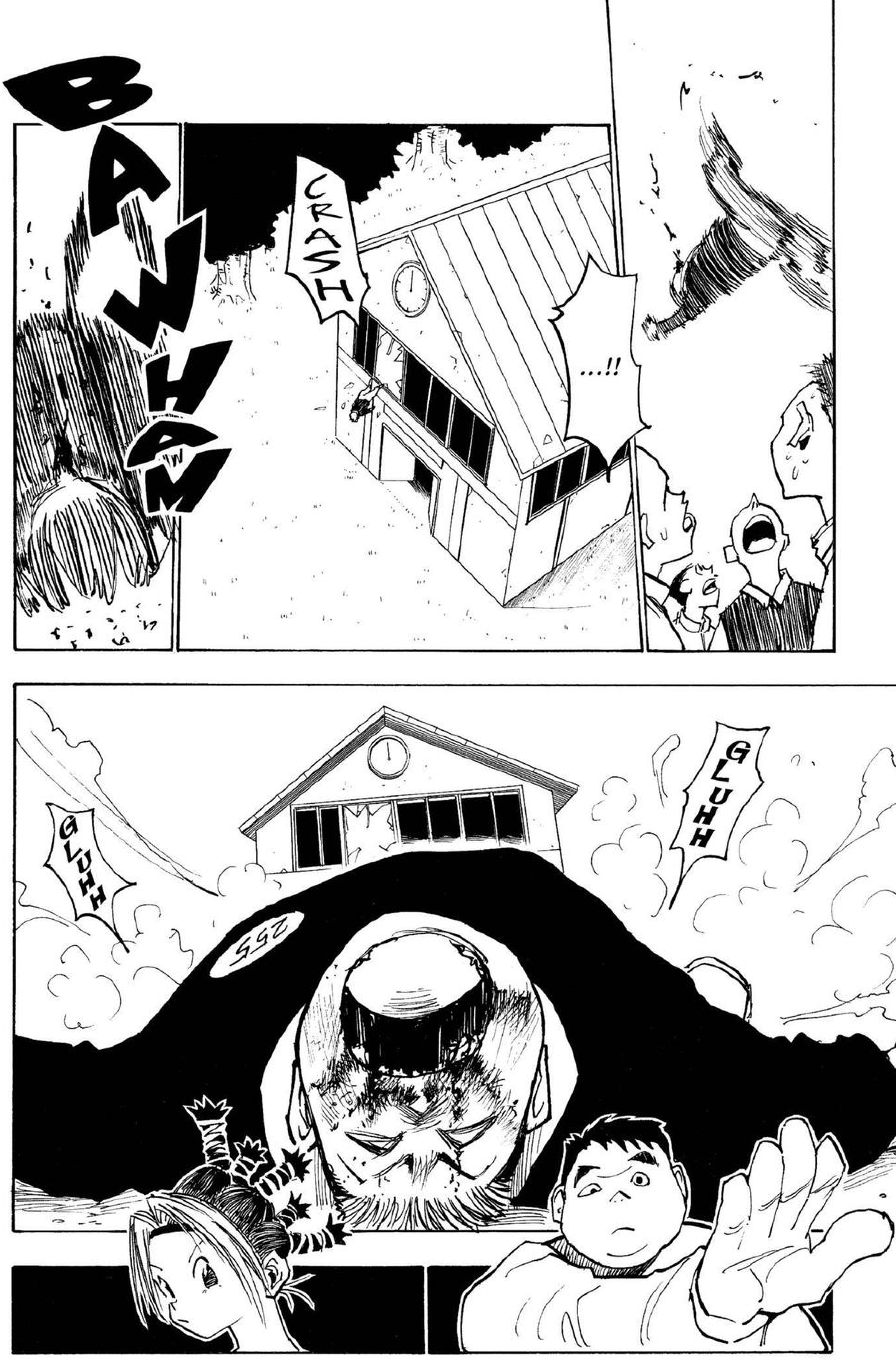

1209
HELLO?
HEAD-STRONG, THAT ONE.
BURZZZZZZZ
CHAIR-MAN?
SHE'S SHUT OFF HER CELL PHONE.
WHAT DO WE DO NOW?
HMM ...

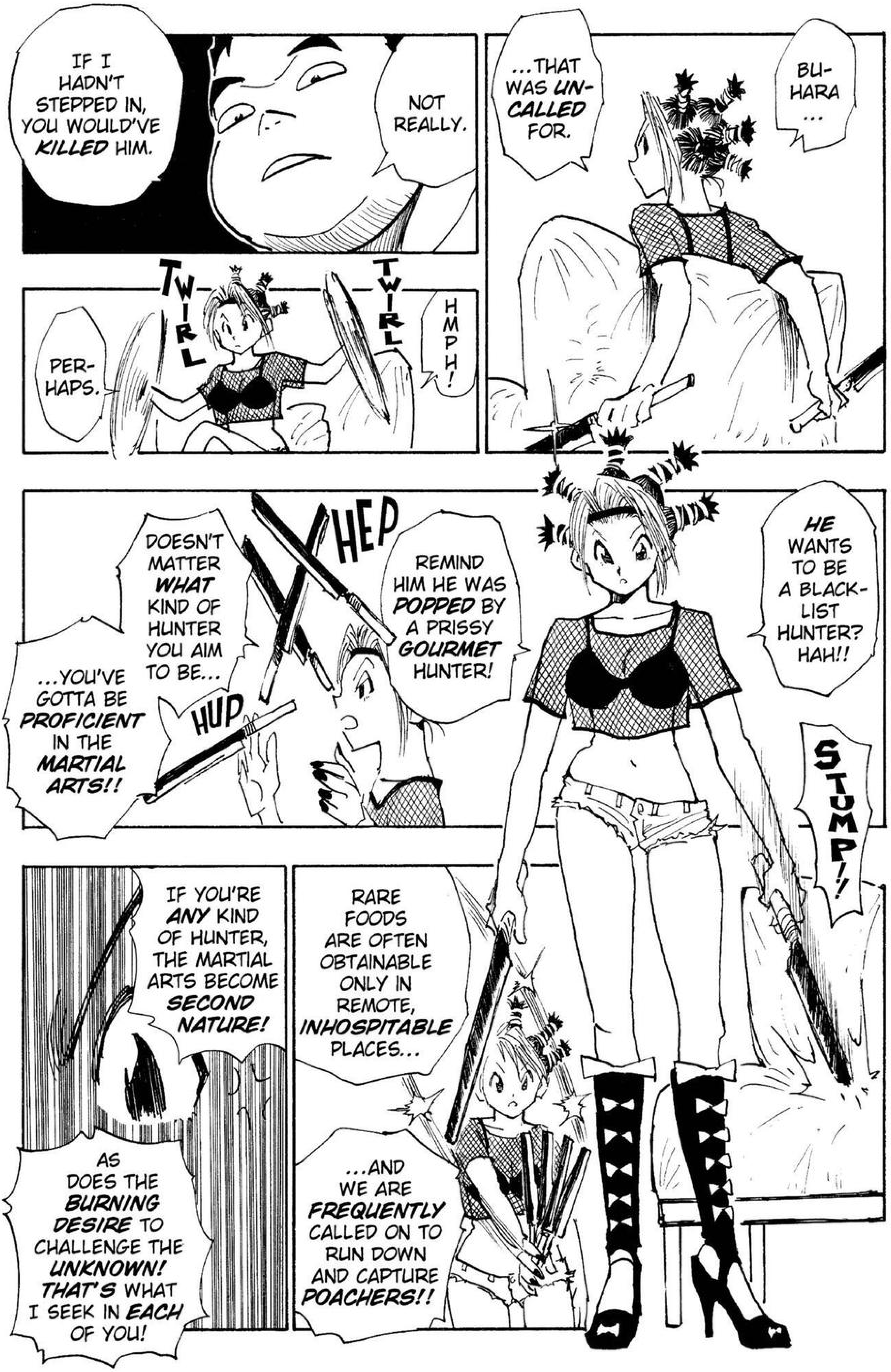
READ THIS WAY

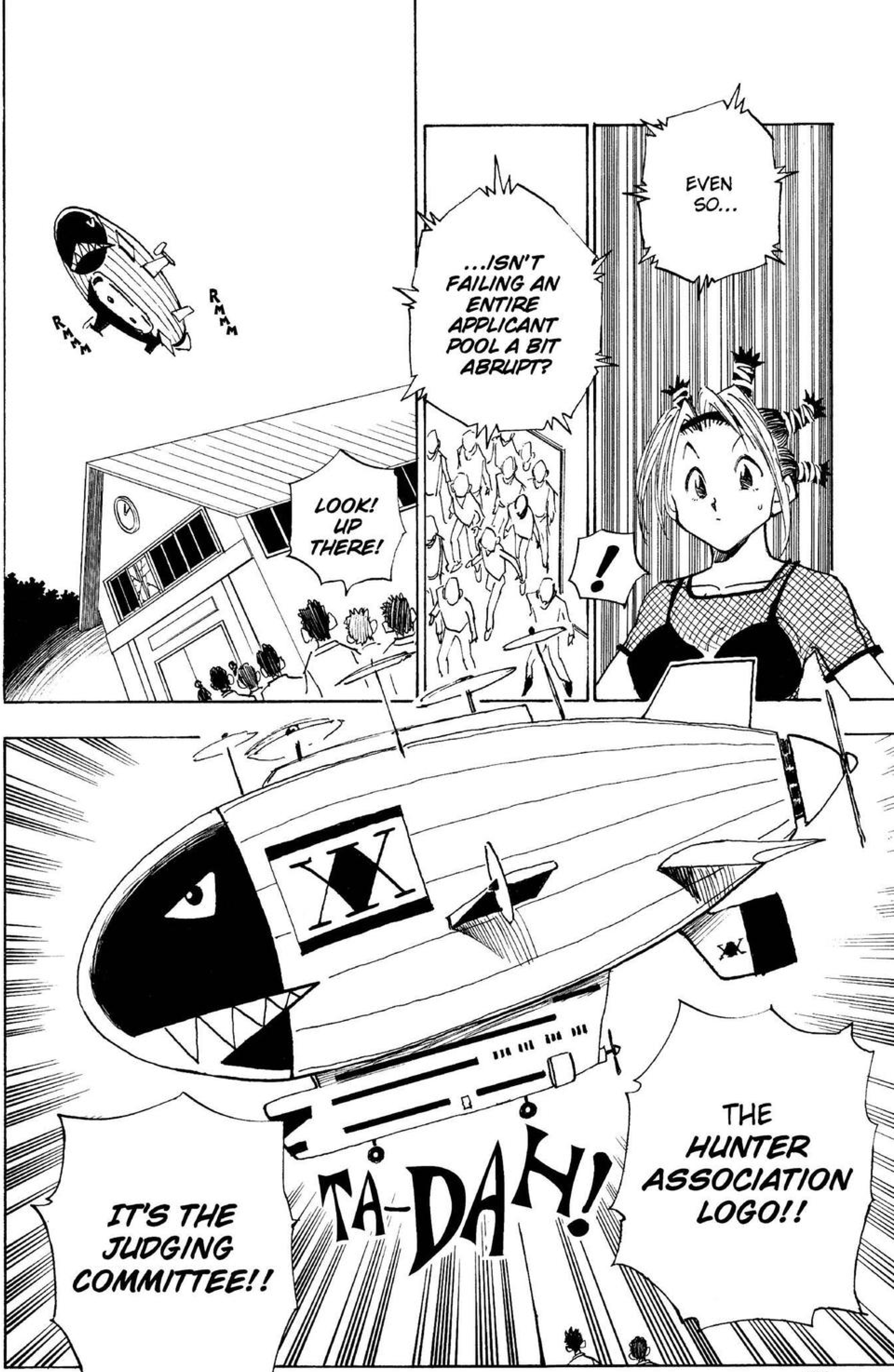

AS YOU SAY, SHE'S HEADSTRONG.
SHE'LL NOT BUDGE ON THIS.
BUT THE *IRREGULARITIES* ARE PILED UP TOO HIGH TO *IGNORE.*
SHE STOPPED TESTING, AND SIMPLY THREW UP A *STONE WALL.*
WELL, WE CAN'T SETTLE IT HERE.
COME ON, LET'S GO.
I DO *APOLOGIZE* FOR TROUBLING YOU.
DON'T. THIS IS A CHAIRMAN'S *JOB.*
IT'S NOT LIKE THIS HASN'T HAPPENED BEFORE.
HUNTERS ARE AN ODDBALL LOT, AND CAN BE QUITE STUBBORN.
THEY SHOULD BE, AND USUALLY *ARE*, VERY STRICT AND NITPICKY.
THERE HAVE BEEN MORE THAN A FEW YEARS WHEN WE HAVEN'T PASSED A SINGLE APPLICANT.
WHOOO
BUT ...
...WE CAN'T HAVE AN *ENTIRE FIELD* THROWN OUT BECAUSE ONE EXAMINER GETS ON HER *HIGH HORSE.*
RMMM RMMM

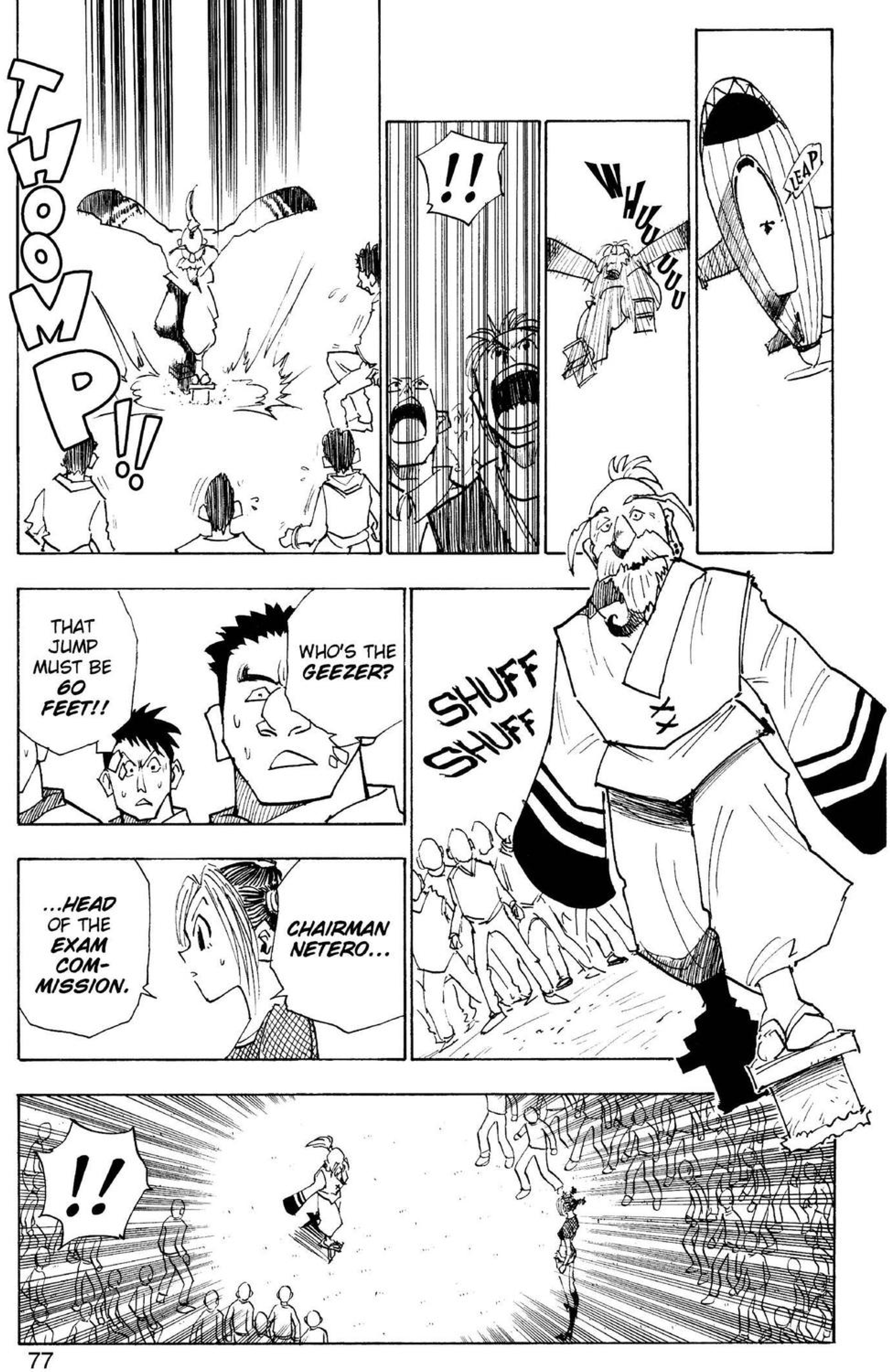

KA-SMASH!!
255
I'VE HAD ENOUGH OF THIS.
YOU DON'T LIKE OUR SUSHI? TOO BAD!
I'M NOT HERE TO BUTCHER FISH AND MUSH RICE!! I'M HERE TO BECOME A HUNTER!!
A BLACK-LIST HUNTER AT THAT!! I WANT A REAL TEST, NOT THIS PRISSY GOURMET HUNTER CRAPOLA!!

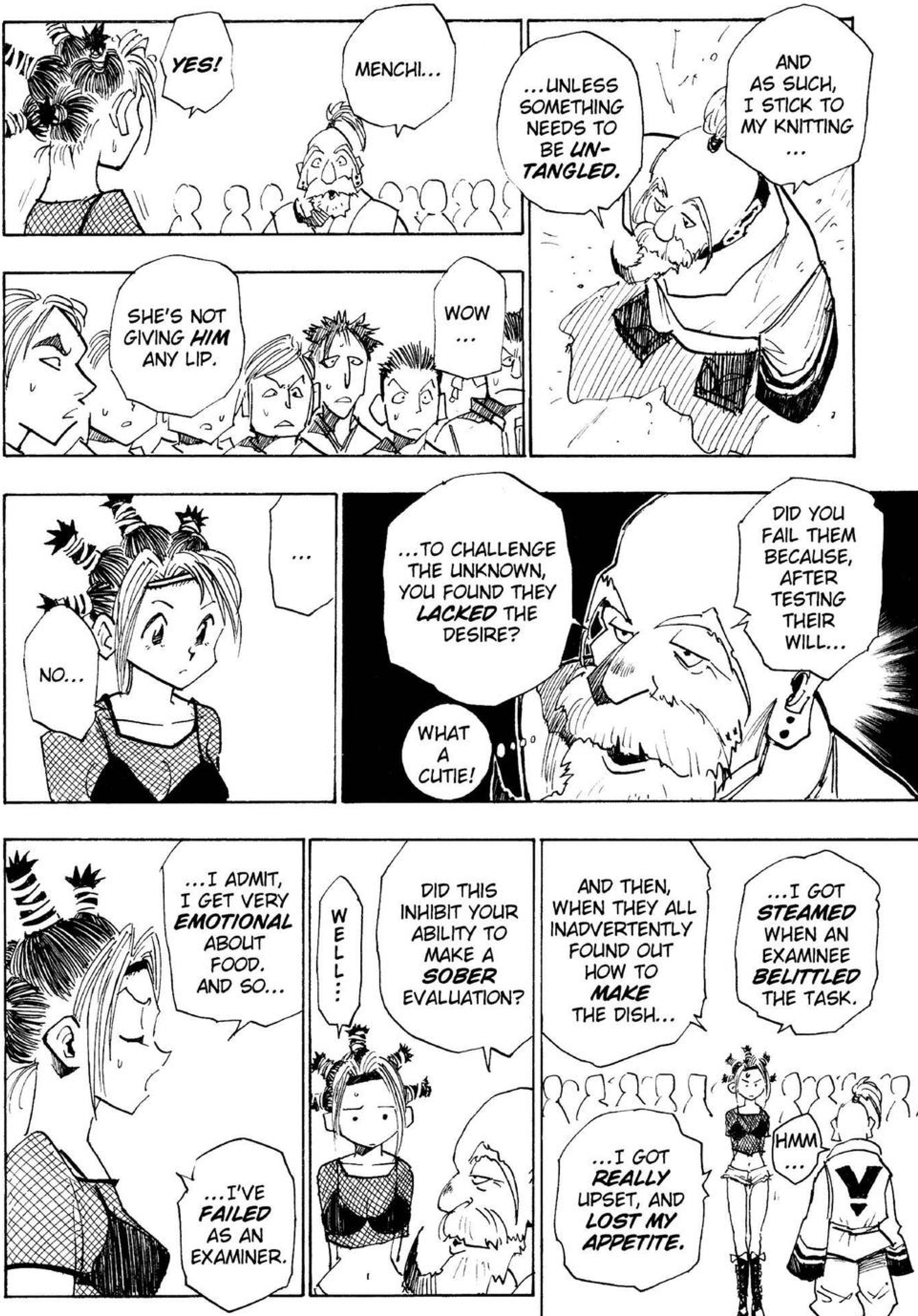

SORRY TO **HEAR** THAT.
YEAH?!
255
YEAH, 'CAUSE THIS YEAR GOURMET HUNTER CRAPOLA **RULES.**
HEY, BETTER LUCK **NEXT** YEAR, HUH?
DON'T YOU ...
...MESS WITH ME!!
CHARGE!!
SMAP

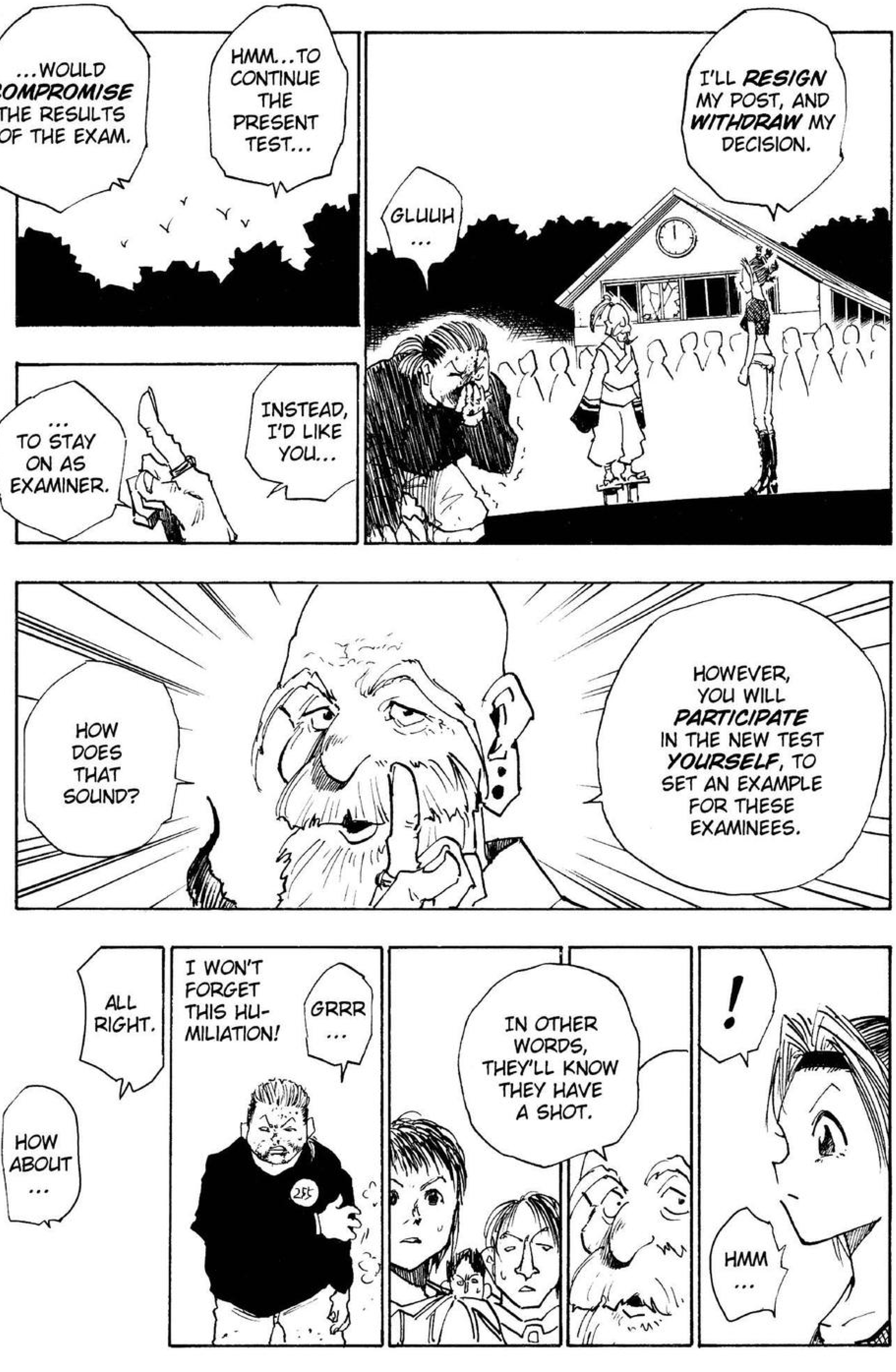

...!!
CRASH
BAWHAM
GLUHH
255
GLUHH

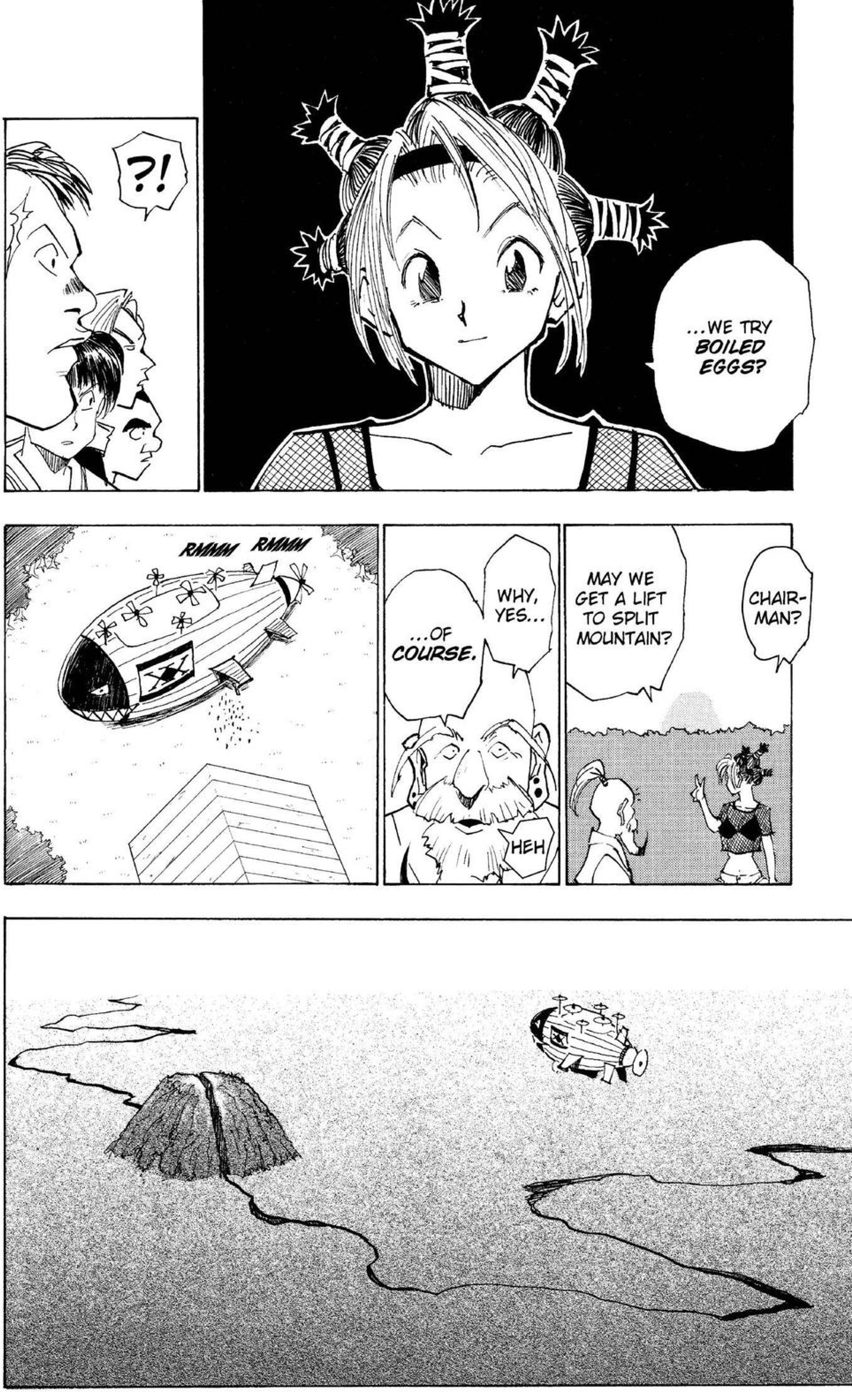

BU-HARA…
…THAT WAS UN-CALLED FOR.
IF I HADN'T STEPPED IN, YOU WOULD'VE KILLED HIM.
NOT REALLY.
HMPH!
TWIRL
TWIRL
PERHAPS.
HE WANTS TO BE A BLACKLIST HUNTER? HAH!!
HEP
REMIND HIM HE WAS POPPED BY A PRISSY GOURMET HUNTER!
DOESN'T MATTER WHAT KIND OF HUNTER YOU AIM TO BE…
…YOU'VE GOTTA BE PROFICIENT IN THE MARTIAL ARTS!!
HUP
STUMP!!
RARE FOODS ARE OFTEN OBTAINABLE ONLY IN REMOTE, INHOSPITABLE PLACES…
…AND WE ARE FREQUENTLY CALLED ON TO RUN DOWN AND CAPTURE POACHERS!!
IF YOU'RE ANY KIND OF HUNTER, THE MARTIAL ARTS BECOME SECOND NATURE!
AS DOES THE BURNING DESIRE TO CHALLENGE THE UNKNOWN! THAT'S WHAT I SEEK IN EACH OF YOU!

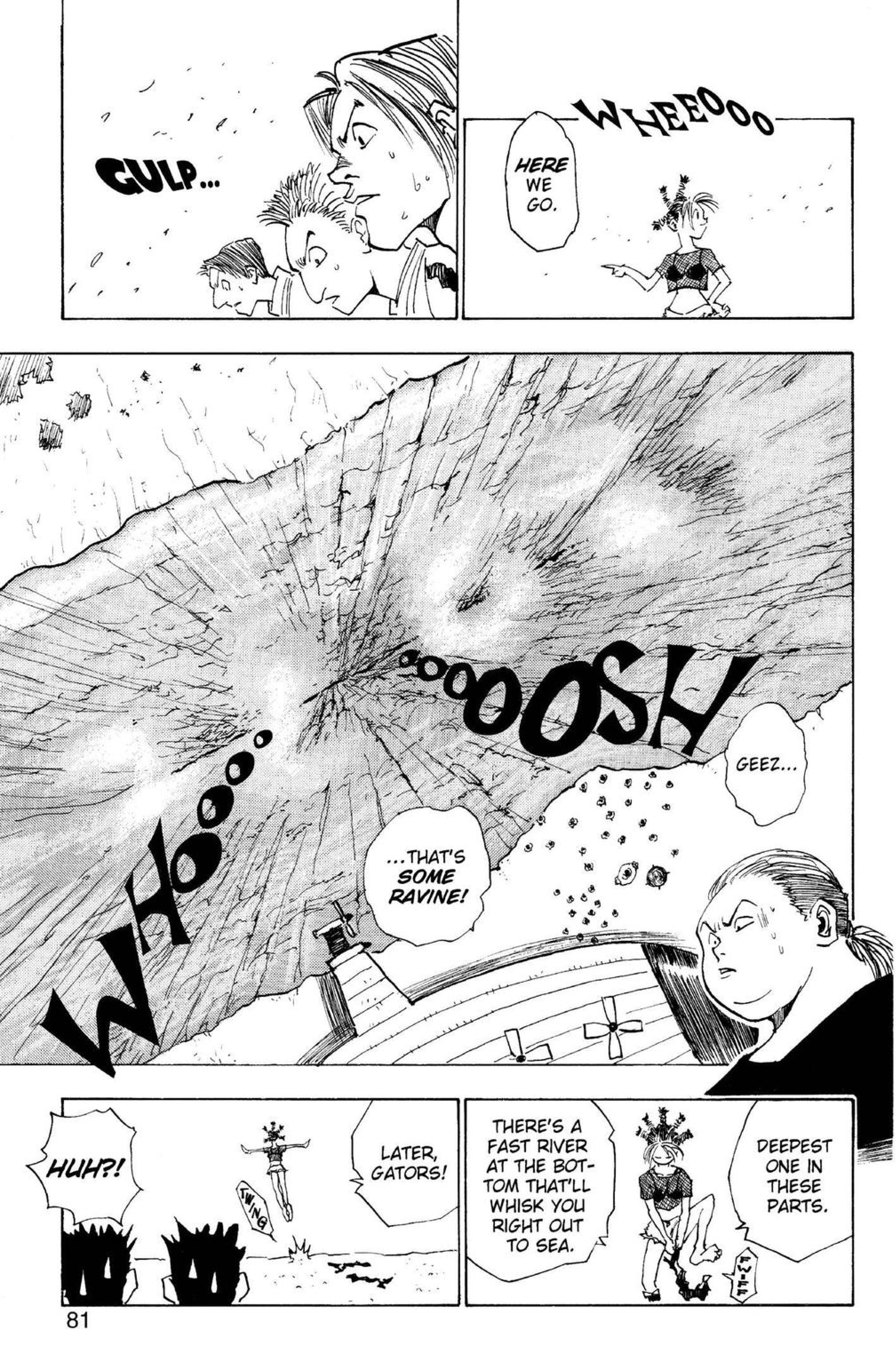

EVEN SO...
...ISN'T FAILING AN ENTIRE APPLICANT POOL A BIT ABRUPT?
!
LOOK! UP THERE!
RMMM
RMMM
THE HUNTER ASSOCIATION LOGO!!
TA-DAH!
IT'S THE JUDGING COMMITTEE!!

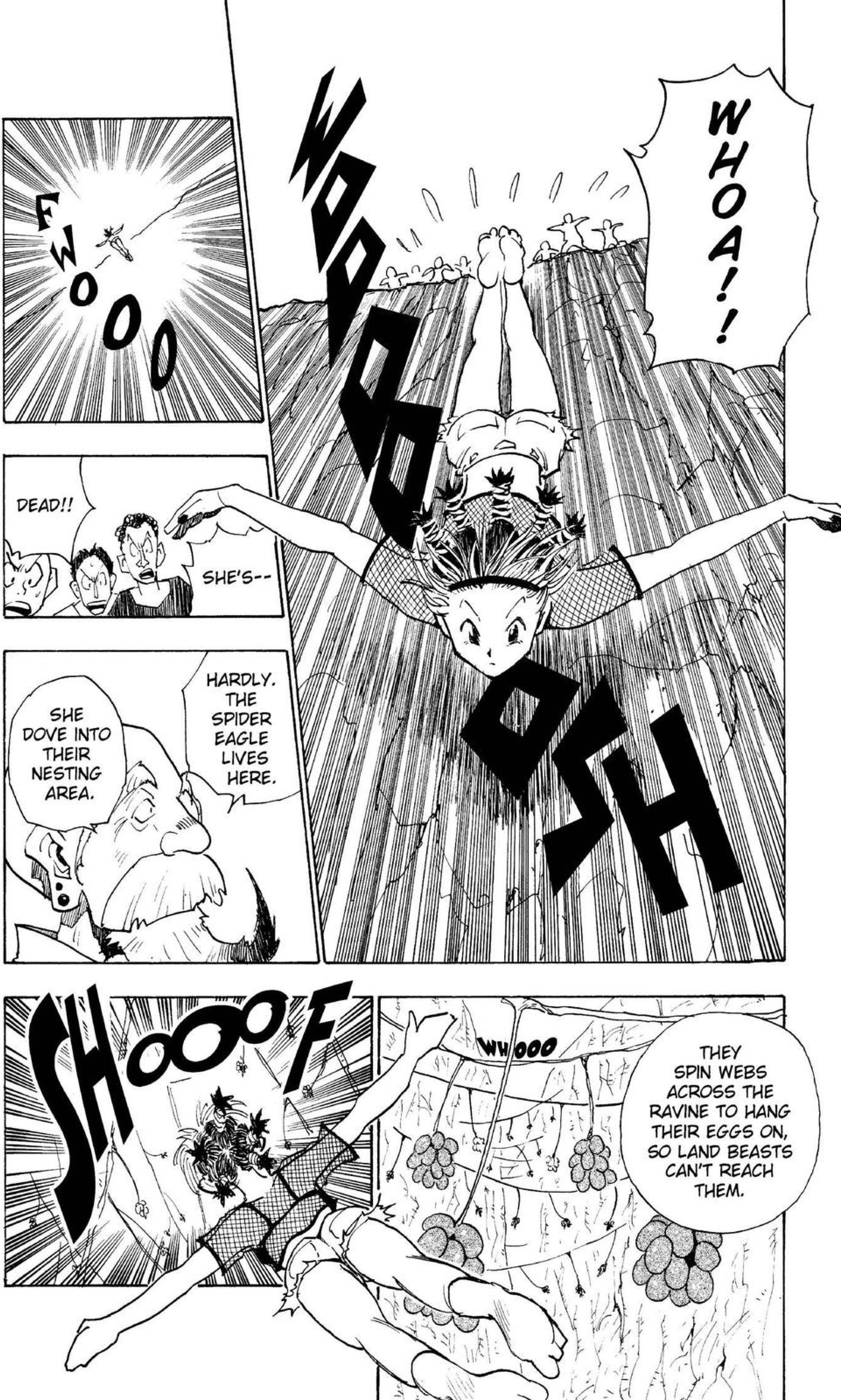

LEAP
WHUUUUUU
!!
THOOMP!!!
SHUFF SHUFF
WHO'S THE GEEZER?
THAT JUMP MUST BE 60 FEET!!
CHAIRMAN NETERO...
...HEAD OF THE EXAM COMMISSION.
!!

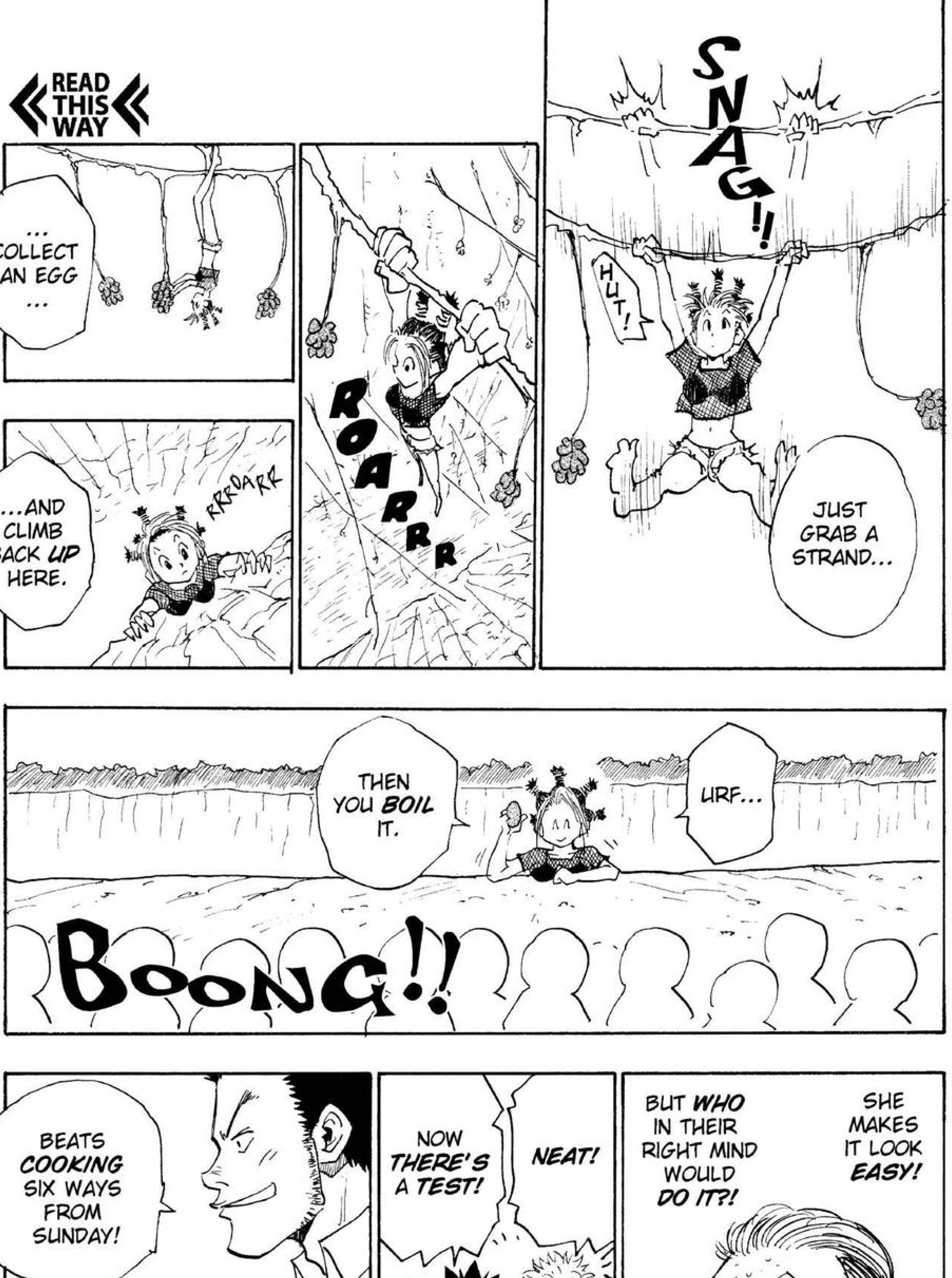

AND AS SUCH, I STICK TO MY KNITTING ...
...UNLESS SOMETHING NEEDS TO BE UNTANGLED.
MENCHI...
YES!
WOW ...
SHE'S NOT GIVING HIM ANY LIP.
DID YOU FAIL THEM BECAUSE, AFTER TESTING THEIR WILL...
...TO CHALLENGE THE UNKNOWN, YOU FOUND THEY LACKED THE DESIRE?
WHAT A CUTIE!
...
NO...
...I GOT STEAMED WHEN AN EXAMINEE BELITTLED THE TASK.
AND THEN, WHEN THEY ALL INADVERTENTLY FOUND OUT HOW TO MAKE THE DISH...
HMM ...
...I GOT REALLY UPSET, AND LOST MY APPETITE.
DID THIS INHIBIT YOUR ABILITY TO MAKE A SOBER EVALUATION?
WELL...
...I ADMIT, I GET VERY EMOTIONAL ABOUT FOOD. AND SO...
...I'VE FAILED AS AN EXAMINER.

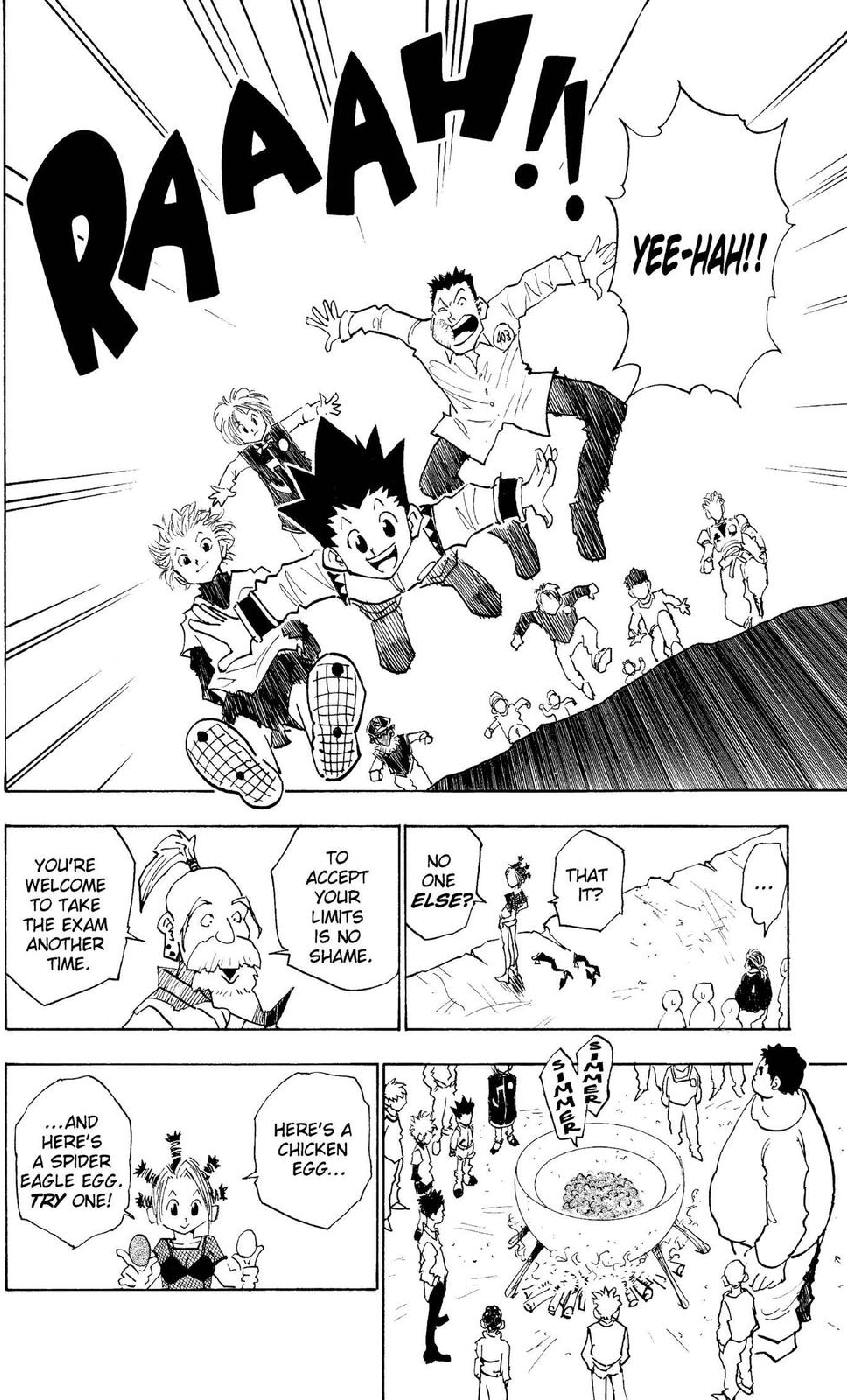

I'LL **RESIGN** MY POST, AND **WITHDRAW** MY DECISION.
GLUUH...
HMM...TO CONTINUE THE PRESENT TEST...
...WOULD **COMPROMISE** THE RESULTS OF THE EXAM.
INSTEAD, I'D LIKE YOU...
...TO STAY ON AS EXAMINER.
HOWEVER, YOU WILL **PARTICIPATE** IN THE NEW TEST **YOURSELF**, TO SET AN EXAMPLE FOR THESE EXAMINEES.
HOW DOES THAT SOUND?
!
HMM...
IN OTHER WORDS, THEY'LL KNOW THEY HAVE A SHOT.
GRRR...
I WON'T FORGET THIS HUMILIATION!
255
ALL RIGHT.
HOW ABOUT...

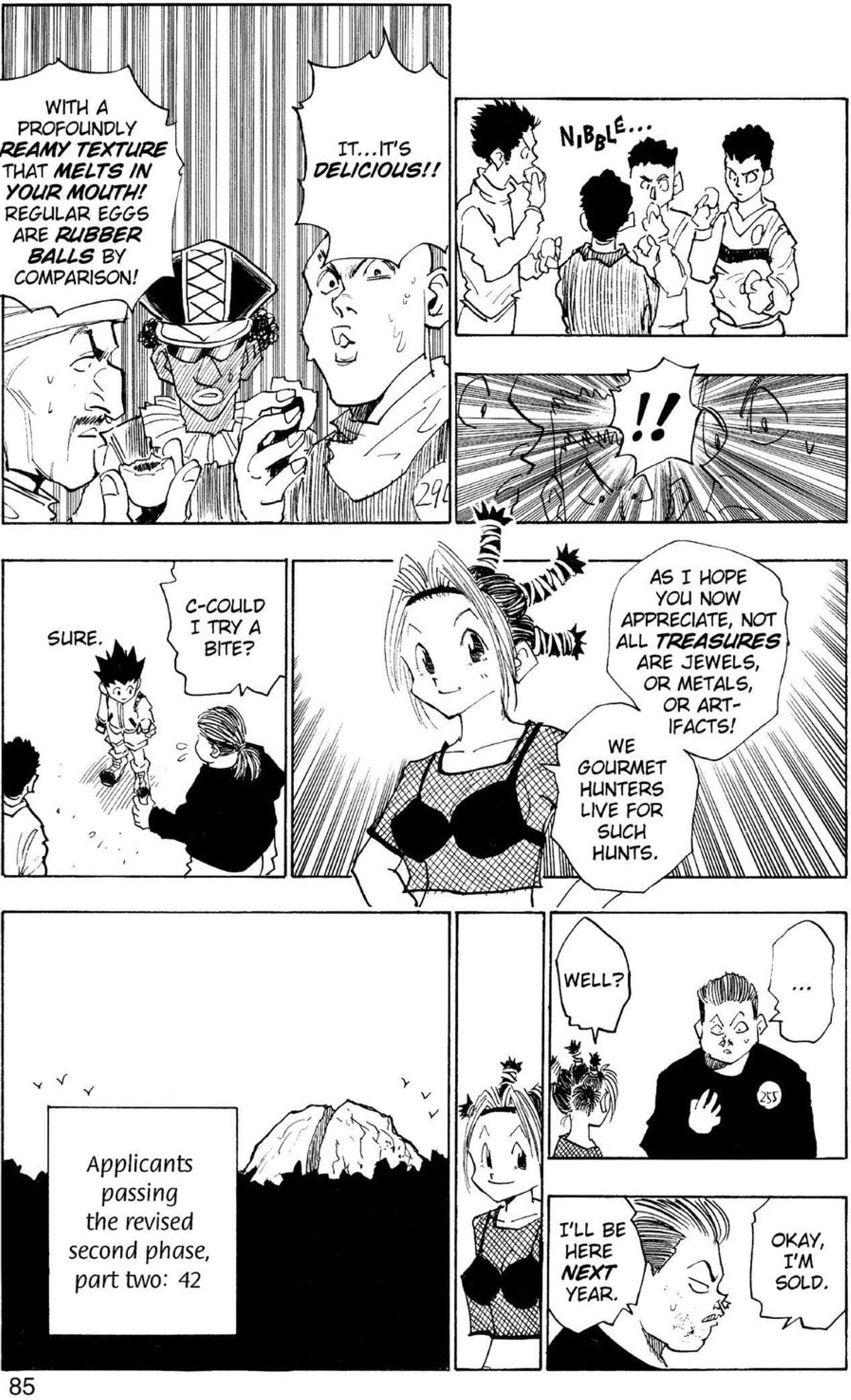

...WE TRY BOILED EGGS?
?!
CHAIR-MAN?
MAY WE GET A LIFT TO SPLIT MOUNTAIN?
WHY, YES...
...OF COURSE.
HEH
RMMM RMMM


WHEEOOO
HERE WE GO.
GULP...
GEEZ...
...THAT'S SOME RAVINE!
WHOOOOOOOOOOSH
DEEPEST ONE IN THESE PARTS.
THERE'S A FAST RIVER AT THE BOTTOM THAT'LL WHISK YOU RIGHT OUT TO SEA.
FWIFF
LATER, GATORS!
TWING
HUH?!


WHOA!!
WOOOOOSH
FWOOO
SHE'S--
DEAD!!
HARDLY. THE SPIDER EAGLE LIVES HERE.
SHE DOVE INTO THEIR NESTING AREA.
WHOOO
THEY SPIN WEBS ACROSS THE RAVINE TO HANG THEIR EGGS ON, SO LAND BEASTS CAN'T REACH THEM.
SHOOOF


READ THIS WAY
SNAG!!
HUT!
JUST GRAB A STRAND...
ROARRRR
... COLLECT AN EGG ...
...AND CLIMB BACK *UP* HERE.
RRRDARR
URF...
THEN YOU *BOIL* IT.
BOONG!!
SHE MAKES IT LOOK *EASY!*
BUT *WHO* IN THEIR RIGHT MIND WOULD *DO IT?!*
NEAT!
NOW *THERE'S* A *TEST!*
BEATS *COOKING* SIX WAYS FROM SUNDAY!
LET'S GO!

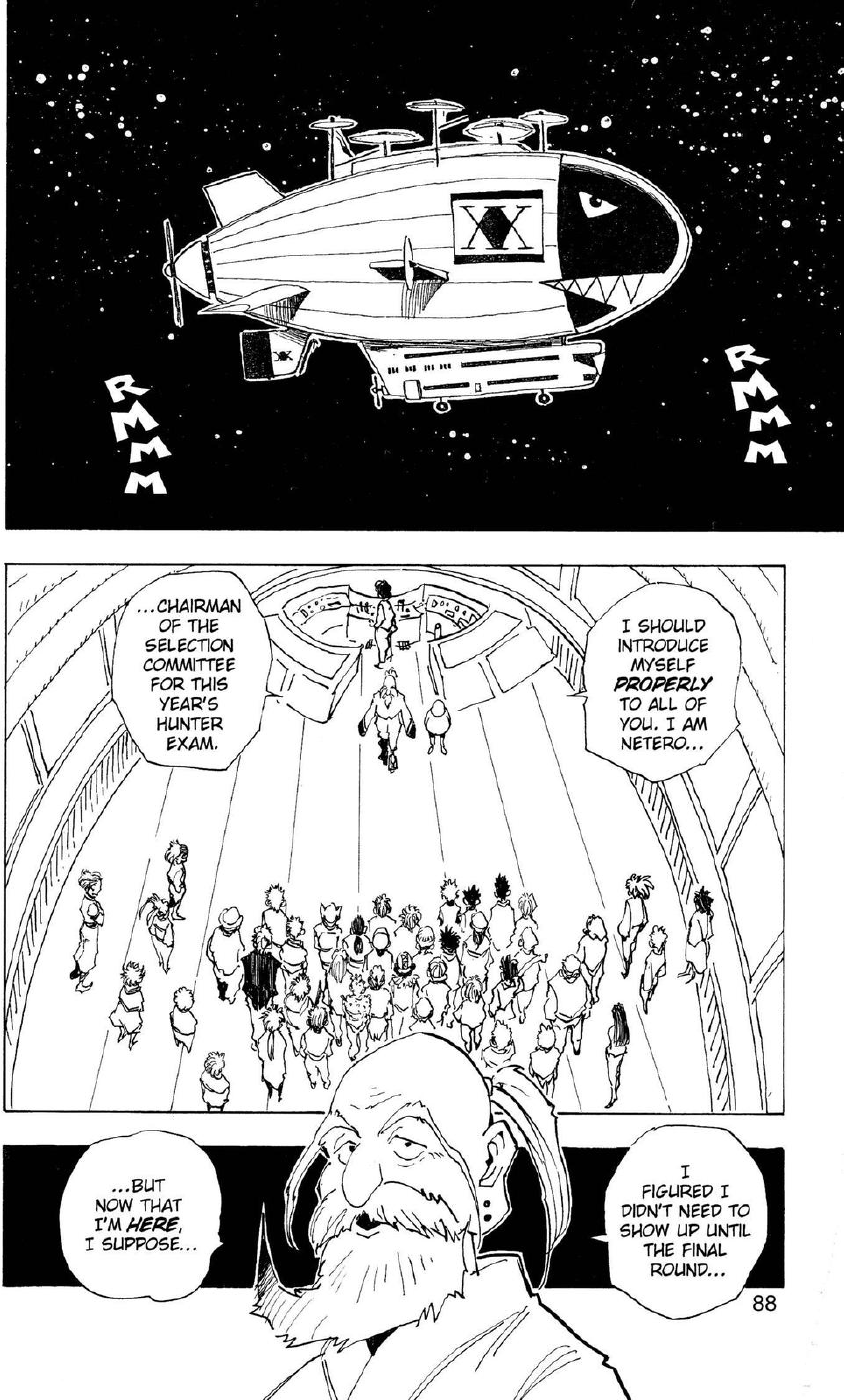

YEE-HAH!!
RAAAAH!!
403
...
THAT IT?
NO ONE *ELSE?*
TO ACCEPT YOUR LIMITS IS NO SHAME.
YOU'RE WELCOME TO TAKE THE EXAM ANOTHER TIME.
SIMMER SIMMER
HERE'S A CHICKEN EGG...
...AND HERE'S A SPIDER EAGLE EGG. *TRY* ONE!


WITH A PROFOUNDLY **CREAMY TEXTURE** THAT **MELTS IN YOUR MOUTH!** REGULAR EGGS ARE **RUBBER BALLS** BY COMPARISON!
IT...IT'S **DELICIOUS!!**
NIBBLE...
294
!!
C-COULD I TRY A BITE?
SURE.
AS I HOPE YOU NOW APPRECIATE, NOT ALL **TREASURES** ARE JEWELS, OR METALS, OR ARTIFACTS!
WE GOURMET HUNTERS LIVE FOR SUCH HUNTS.
Applicants passing the revised second phase, part two: 42
WELL?
...
255
OKAY, I'M SOLD.
I'LL BE HERE **NEXT** YEAR.

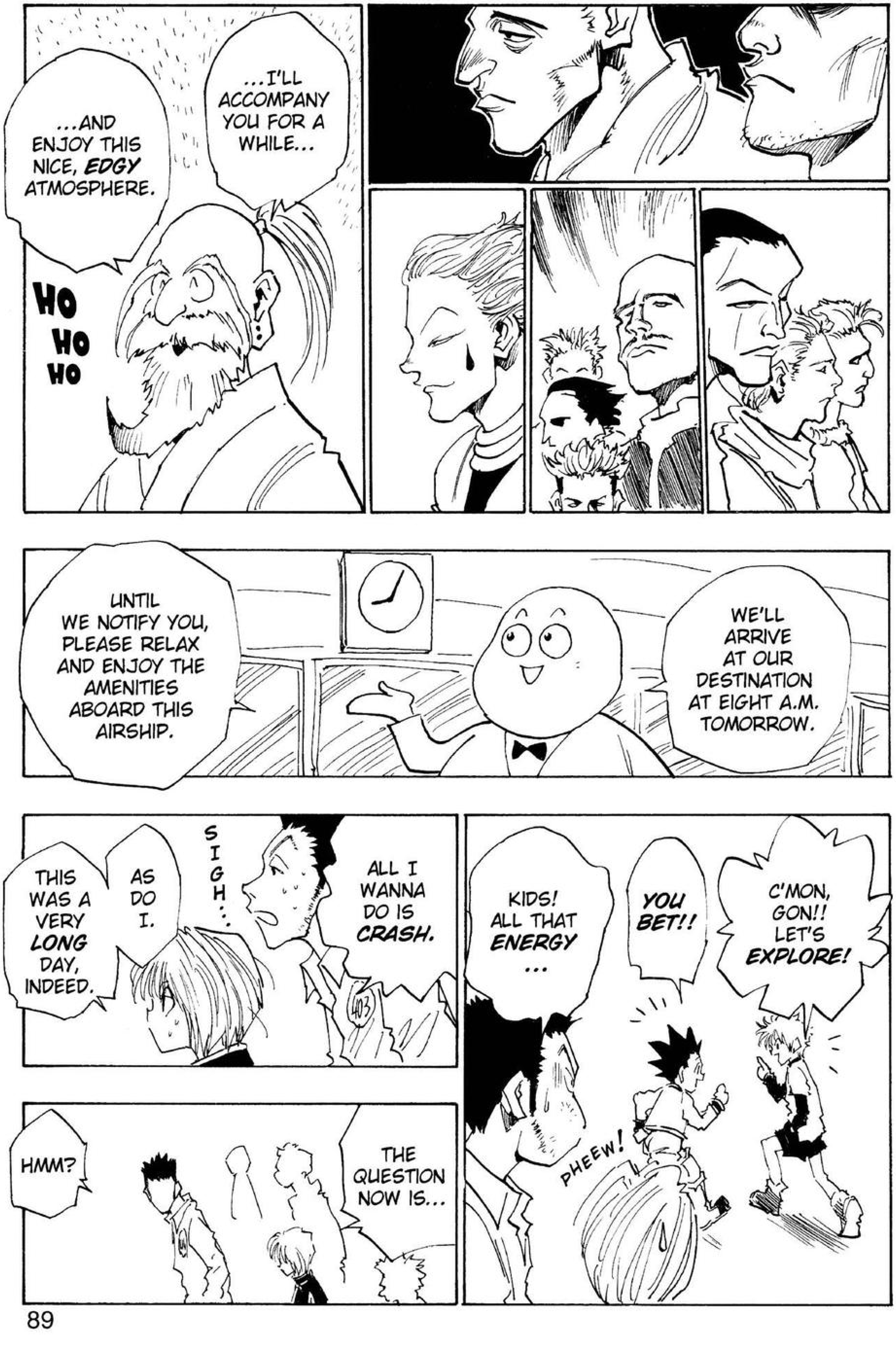
Hanzo

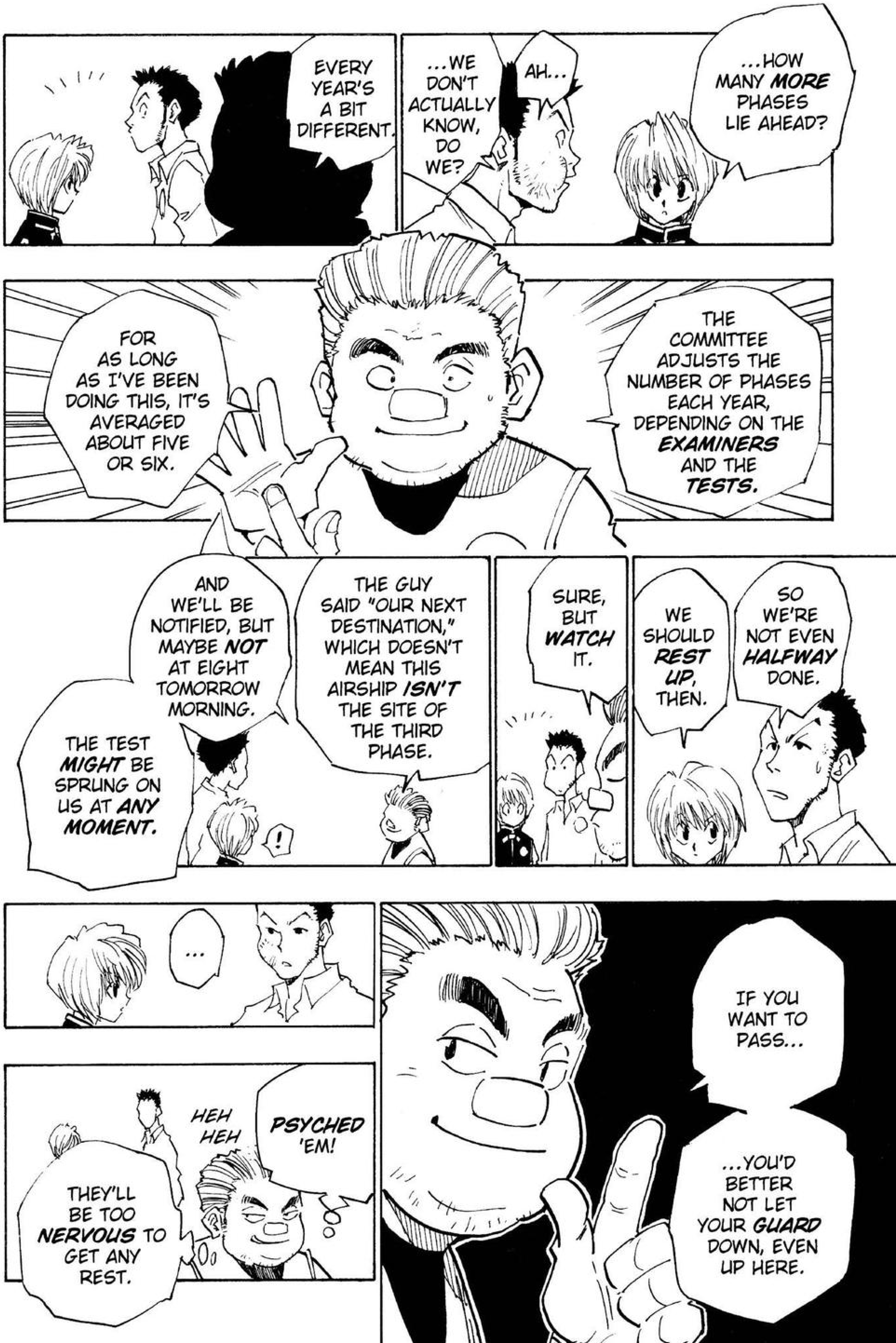
Chapter 13

A Game at Midnight, part 1

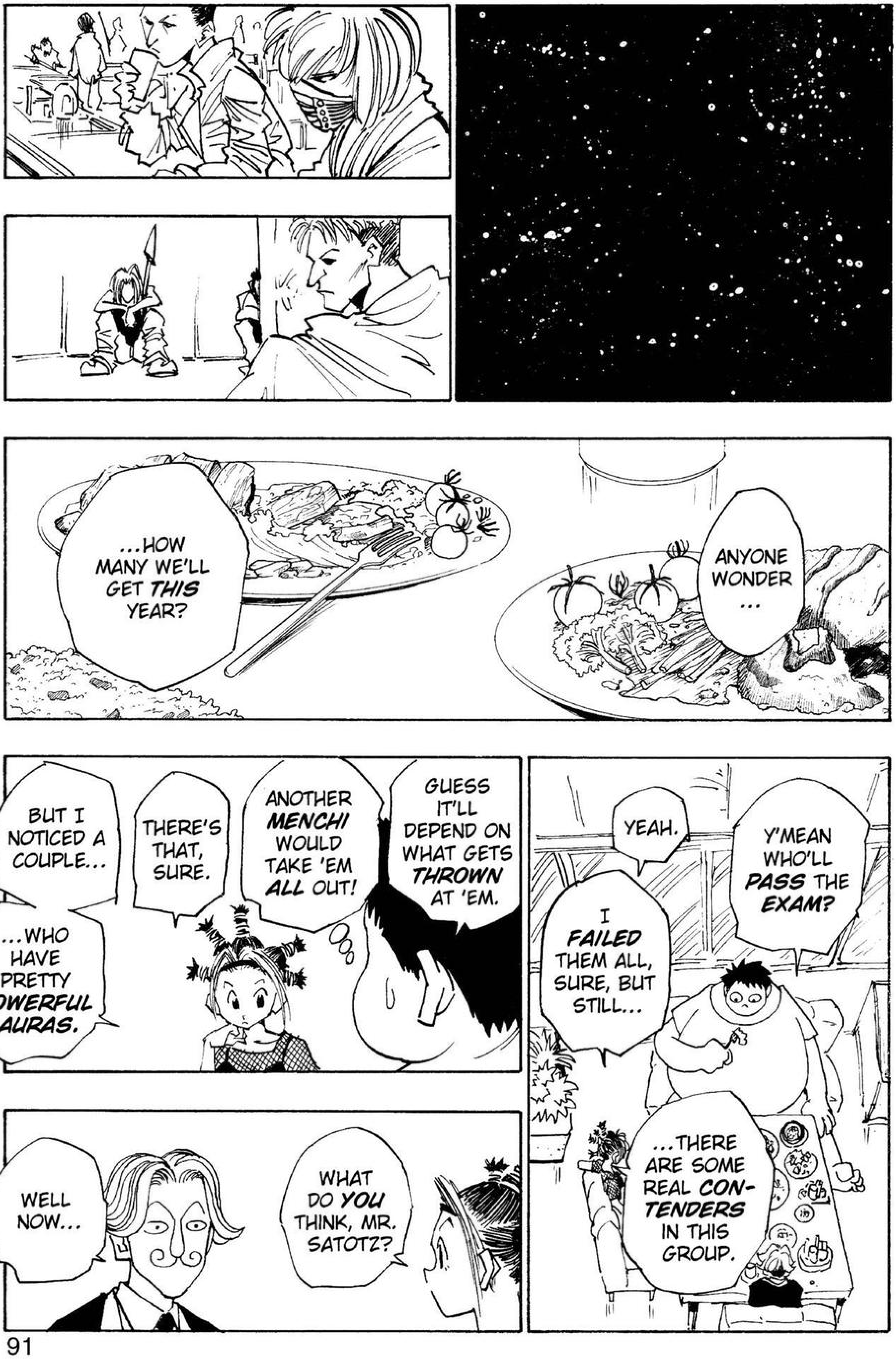

RMMM
RMMM
I SHOULD INTRODUCE MYSELF **PROPERLY** TO ALL OF YOU. I AM NETERO...
...CHAIRMAN OF THE SELECTION COMMITTEE FOR THIS YEAR'S HUNTER EXAM.
I FIGURED I DIDN'T NEED TO SHOW UP UNTIL THE FINAL ROUND...
...BUT NOW THAT I'M **HERE**, I SUPPOSE...

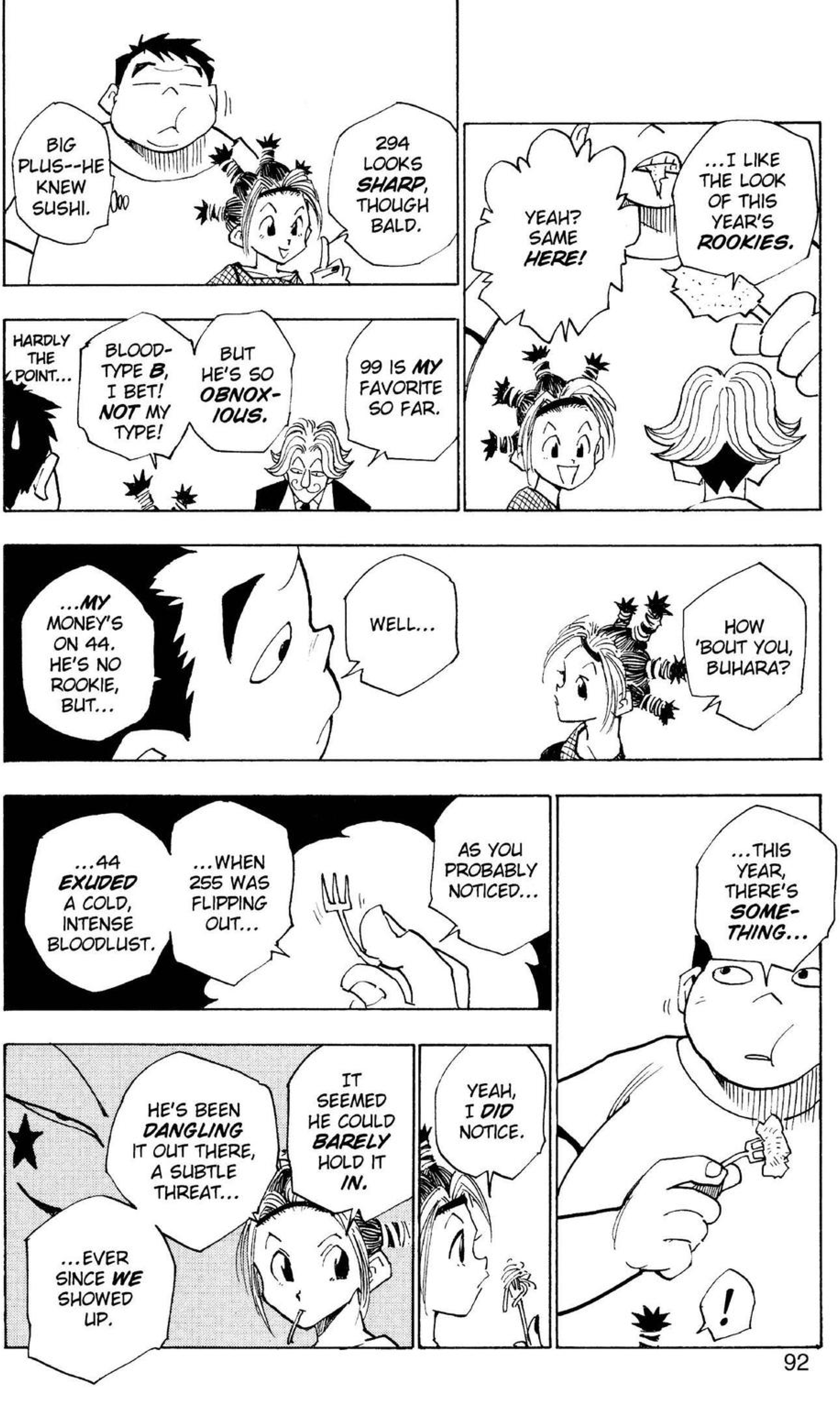
READ THIS WAY

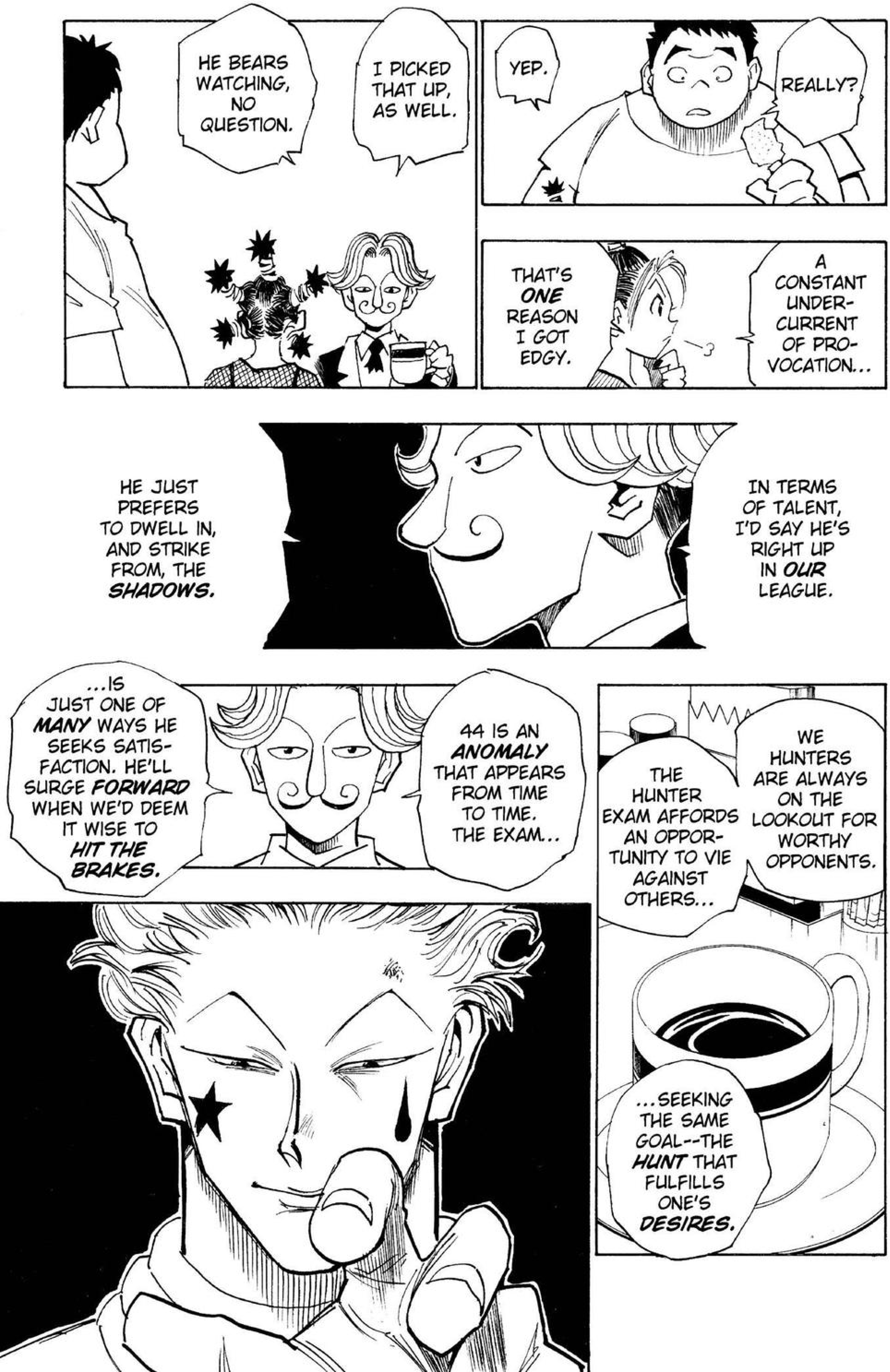

...I'LL ACCOMPANY YOU FOR A WHILE...
...AND ENJOY THIS NICE, EDGY ATMOSPHERE.
HO HO HO
WE'LL ARRIVE AT OUR DESTINATION AT EIGHT A.M. TOMORROW.
UNTIL WE NOTIFY YOU, PLEASE RELAX AND ENJOY THE AMENITIES ABOARD THIS AIRSHIP.
C'MON, GON!! LET'S EXPLORE!
YOU BET!!
KIDS! ALL THAT ENERGY...
PHEEW!
ALL I WANNA DO IS CRASH.
SIGH...
AS DO I.
THIS WAS A VERY LONG DAY, INDEED.
403
THE QUESTION NOW IS...
HMM?

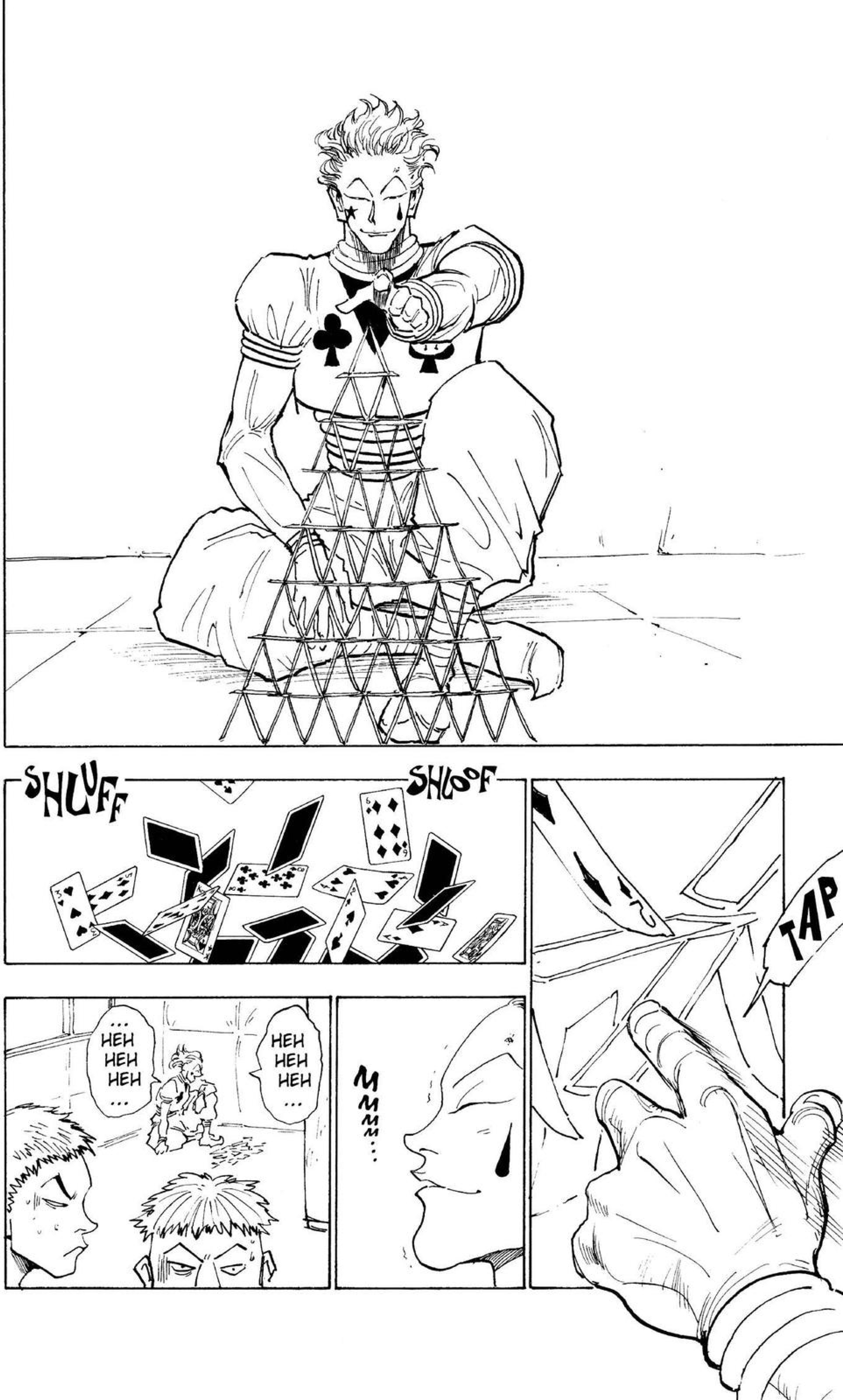

...HOW MANY *MORE* PHASES LIE AHEAD?
AH...
...WE DON'T ACTUALLY KNOW, DO WE?
EVERY YEAR'S A BIT DIFFERENT.
THE COMMITTEE ADJUSTS THE NUMBER OF PHASES EACH YEAR, DEPENDING ON THE ***EXAMINERS*** AND THE ***TESTS.***
FOR AS LONG AS I'VE BEEN DOING THIS, IT'S AVERAGED ABOUT FIVE OR SIX.
SO WE'RE NOT EVEN ***HALFWAY*** DONE.
WE SHOULD ***REST UP,*** THEN.
SURE, BUT ***WATCH*** IT.
THE GUY SAID "OUR NEXT DESTINATION," WHICH DOESN'T MEAN THIS AIRSHIP ***ISN'T*** THE SITE OF THE THIRD PHASE.
!
AND WE'LL BE NOTIFIED, BUT MAYBE ***NOT*** AT EIGHT TOMORROW MORNING.
THE TEST ***MIGHT*** BE SPRUNG ON US AT ***ANY MOMENT.***
IF YOU WANT TO PASS...
...YOU'D BETTER NOT LET YOUR ***GUARD*** DOWN, EVEN UP HERE.
...
PSYCHED 'EM!
HEH HEH
THEY'LL BE TOO ***NERVOUS*** TO GET ANY REST.

READ THIS WAY

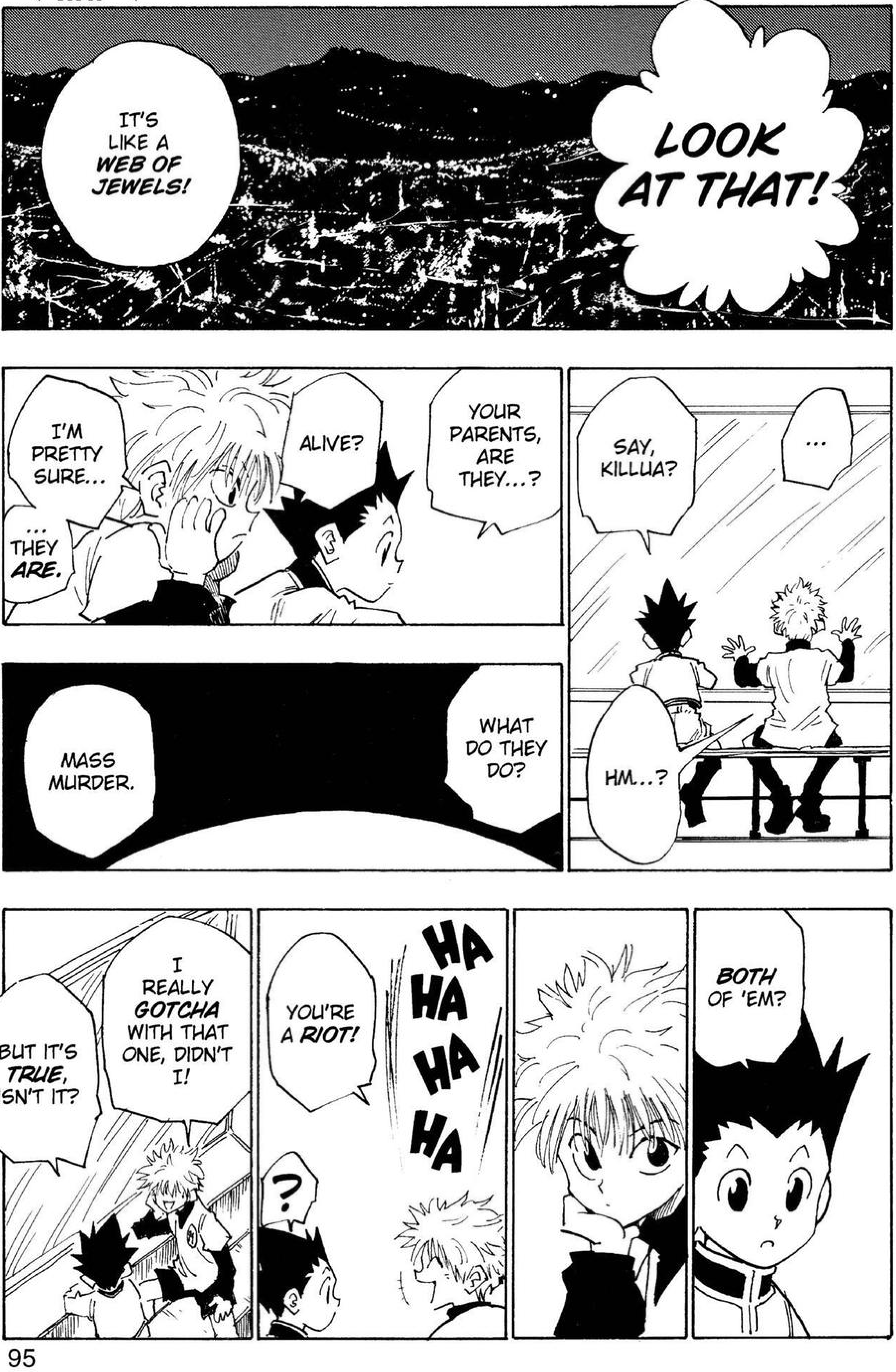

ANYONE WONDER...
...HOW MANY WE'LL GET THIS YEAR?
Y'MEAN WHO'LL PASS THE EXAM?
YEAH.
I FAILED THEM ALL, SURE, BUT STILL...
...THERE ARE SOME REAL CONTENDERS IN THIS GROUP.
GUESS IT'LL DEPEND ON WHAT GETS THROWN AT 'EM.
ANOTHER MENCHI WOULD TAKE 'EM ALL OUT!
THERE'S THAT, SURE.
BUT I NOTICED A COUPLE...
...WHO HAVE PRETTY POWERFUL AURAS.
WHAT DO YOU THINK, MR. SATOTZ?
WELL NOW...

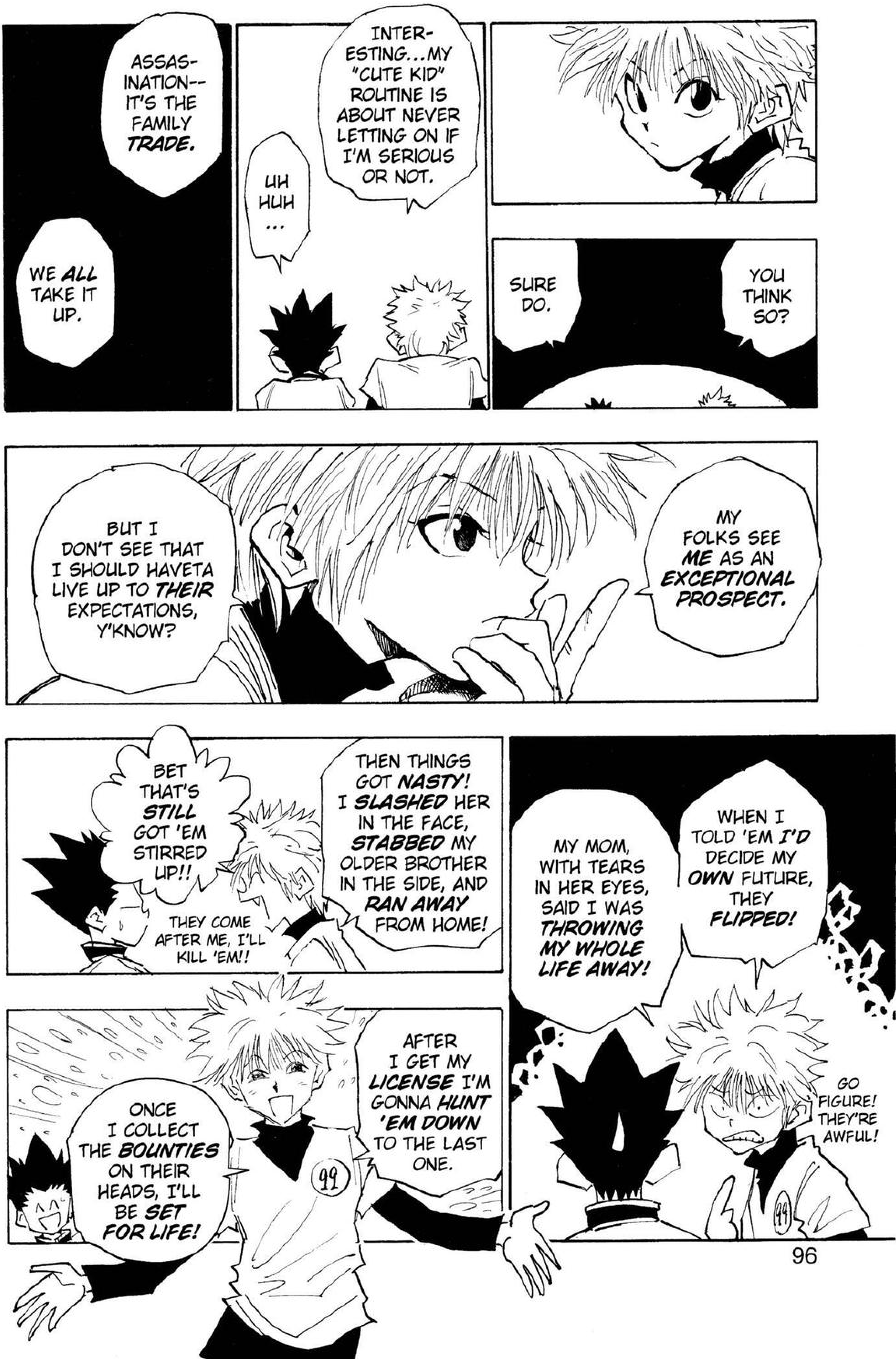

...I LIKE THE LOOK OF THIS YEAR'S **ROOKIES.**
YEAH? SAME **HERE!**
294 LOOKS **SHARP,** THOUGH BALD.
BIG PLUS--HE KNEW SUSHI.
99 IS **MY** FAVORITE SO FAR.
BUT HE'S SO **OBNOXIOUS.**
BLOOD-TYPE **B,** I BET! **NOT** MY TYPE!
HARDLY THE POINT...
HOW 'BOUT YOU, BUHARA?
WELL...
...**MY** MONEY'S ON 44. HE'S NO ROOKIE, BUT...
...THIS YEAR, THERE'S **SOMETHING...**
AS YOU PROBABLY NOTICED...
...WHEN 255 WAS FLIPPING OUT...
...44 **EXUDED** A COLD, INTENSE BLOODLUST.
!
YEAH, I **DID** NOTICE.
IT SEEMED HE COULD **BARELY** HOLD IT **IN.**
HE'S BEEN **DANGLING** IT OUT THERE, A SUBTLE THREAT...
...EVER SINCE **WE** SHOWED UP.


REALLY?
YEP.
I PICKED THAT UP, AS WELL.
HE BEARS WATCHING, NO QUESTION.
A CONSTANT UNDERCURRENT OF PROVOCATION...
THAT'S *ONE* REASON I GOT EDGY.
IN TERMS OF TALENT, I'D SAY HE'S RIGHT UP IN *OUR* LEAGUE.
HE JUST PREFERS TO DWELL IN, AND STRIKE FROM, THE *SHADOWS.*
WE HUNTERS ARE ALWAYS ON THE LOOKOUT FOR WORTHY OPPONENTS.
THE HUNTER EXAM AFFORDS AN OPPORTUNITY TO VIE AGAINST OTHERS...
...SEEKING THE SAME GOAL--THE *HUNT* THAT FULFILLS ONE'S *DESIRES.*
44 IS AN *ANOMALY* THAT APPEARS FROM TIME TO TIME. THE EXAM...
...IS JUST ONE OF *MANY* WAYS HE SEEKS SATISFACTION. HE'LL SURGE *FORWARD* WHEN WE'D DEEM IT WISE TO *HIT THE BRAKES.*

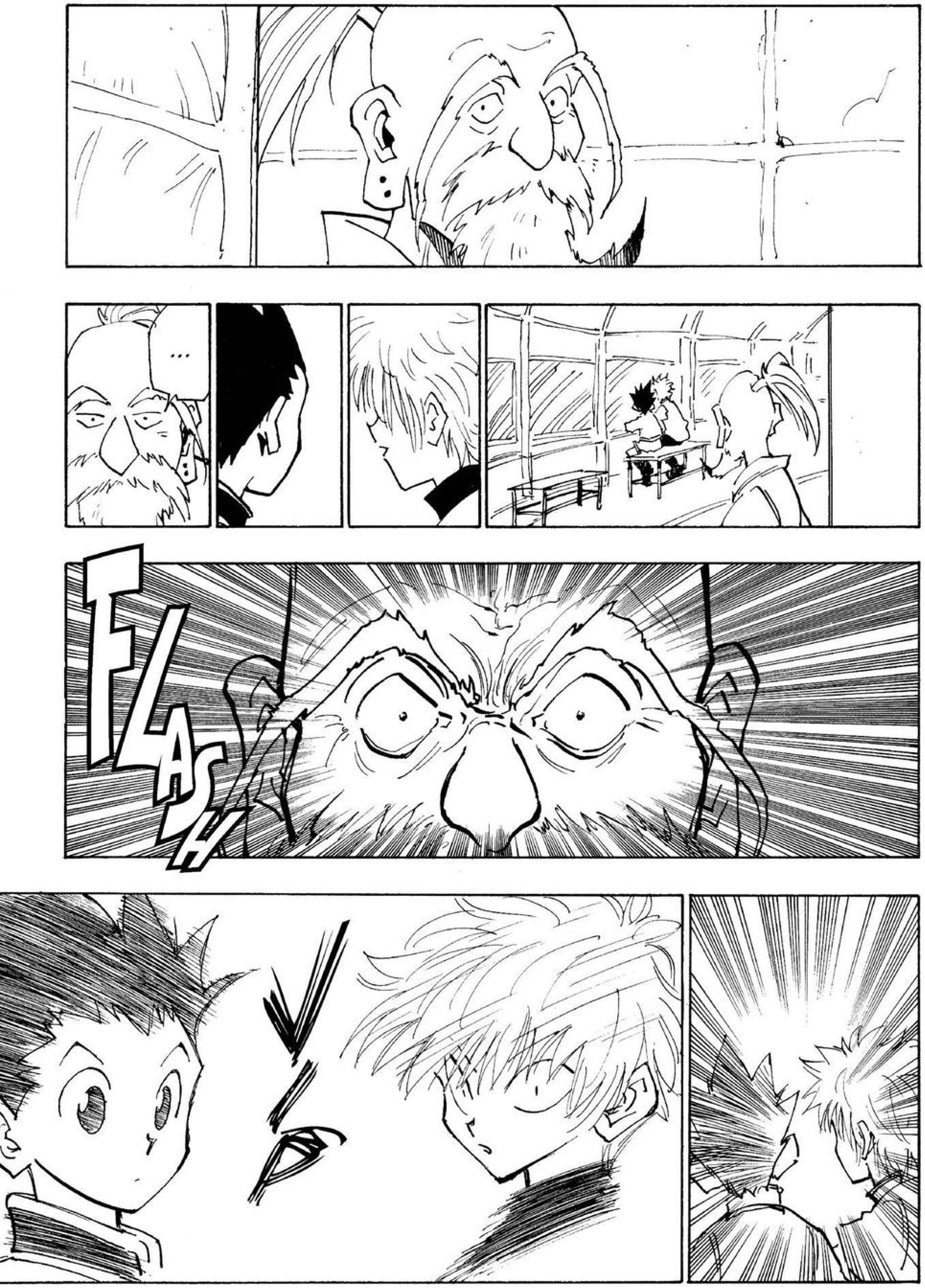

TAP
SHUFF
SHUOOF
MMMM...
HEH HEH HEH ...
... HEH HEH HEH ...

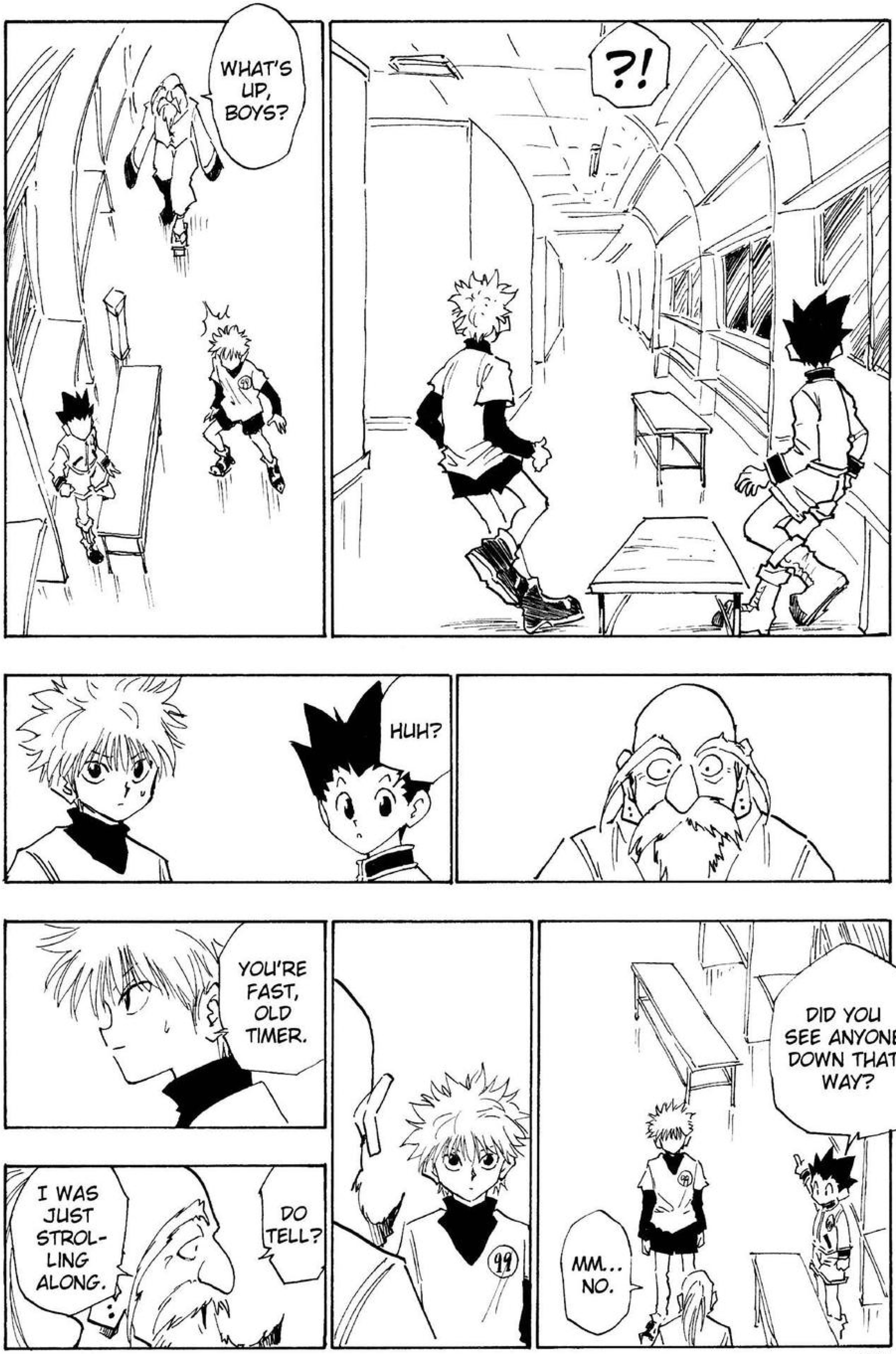
READ THIS WAY

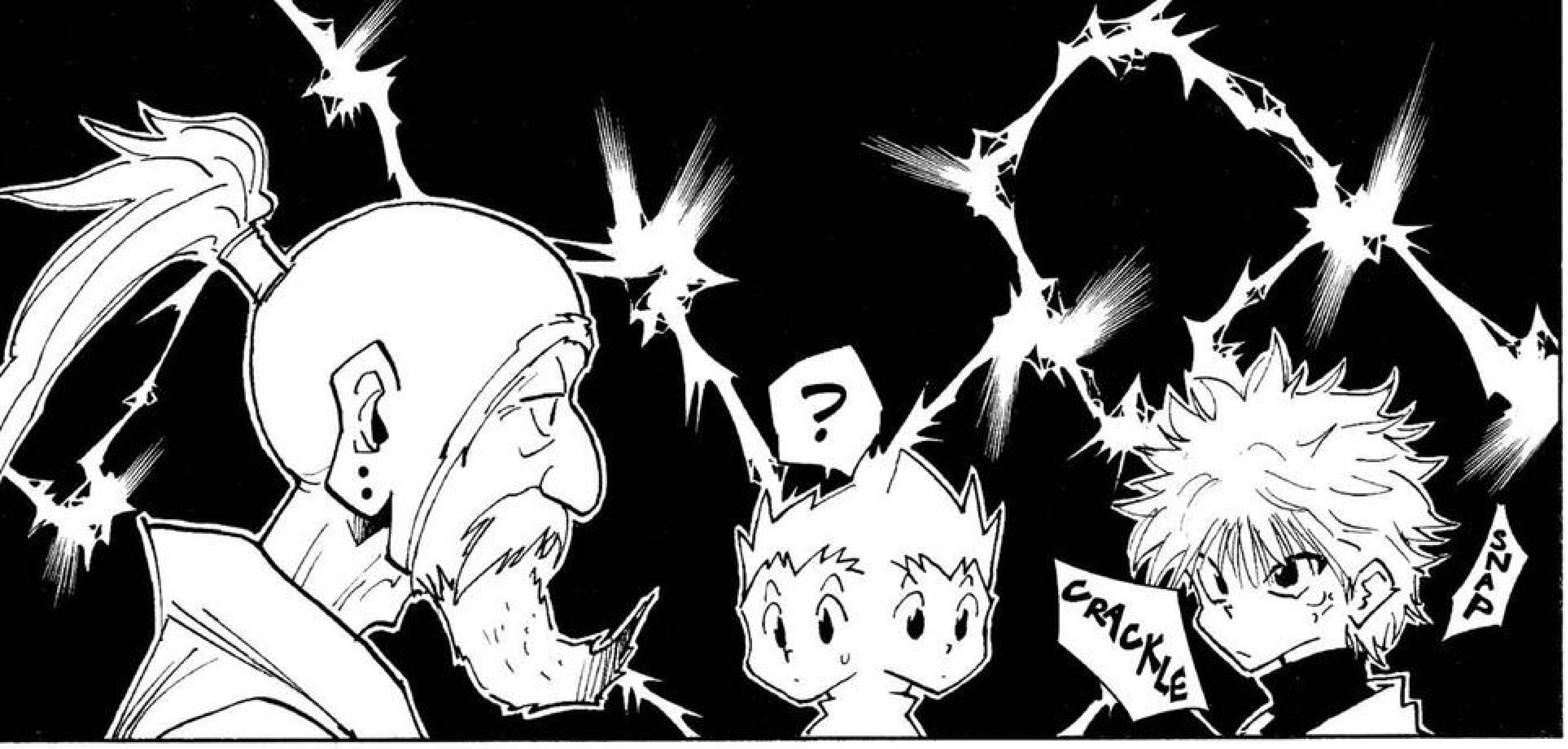

LOOK AT THAT!
IT'S LIKE A *WEB OF JEWELS!*
...
SAY, KILLUA?
HM...?
YOUR PARENTS, ARE THEY...?
ALIVE?
I'M PRETTY SURE...
... THEY *ARE.*
WHAT DO THEY DO?
MASS MURDER.
BOTH OF 'EM?
HA HA HA HA HA
YOU'RE A *RIOT!*
?
I REALLY *GOTCHA* WITH THAT ONE, DIDN'T I!
BUT IT'S *TRUE,* ISN'T IT?

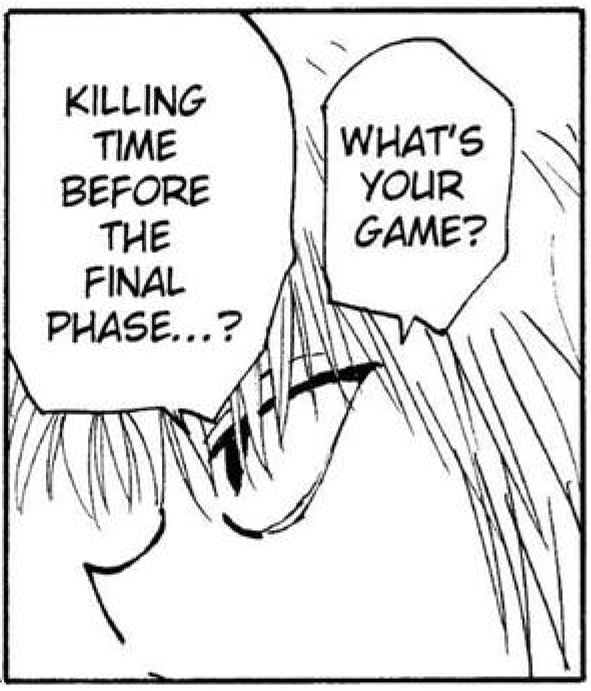

ASSASSINATION-- IT'S THE FAMILY *TRADE.*
WE *ALL* TAKE IT UP.
UH HUH ...
INTERESTING... MY "CUTE KID" ROUTINE IS ABOUT NEVER LETTING ON IF I'M SERIOUS OR NOT.
YOU THINK SO?
SURE DO.
MY FOLKS SEE *ME* AS AN *EXCEPTIONAL PROSPECT.*
BUT I DON'T SEE THAT I SHOULD HAVETA LIVE UP TO *THEIR* EXPECTATIONS, Y'KNOW?
WHEN I TOLD 'EM *I'D* DECIDE MY *OWN* FUTURE, THEY *FLIPPED!*
MY MOM, WITH TEARS IN HER EYES, SAID I WAS *THROWING MY WHOLE LIFE AWAY!*
GO FIGURE! THEY'RE AWFUL!
THEN THINGS GOT *NASTY!* I *SLASHED* HER IN THE FACE, *STABBED* MY OLDER BROTHER IN THE SIDE, AND *RAN AWAY* FROM HOME!
BET THAT'S *STILL* GOT 'EM STIRRED UP!!
THEY COME AFTER ME, I'LL KILL 'EM!!
AFTER I GET MY *LICENSE* I'M GONNA *HUNT 'EM DOWN* TO THE LAST ONE.
ONCE I COLLECT THE *BOUNTIES* ON THEIR HEADS, I'LL BE *SET FOR LIFE!*
99

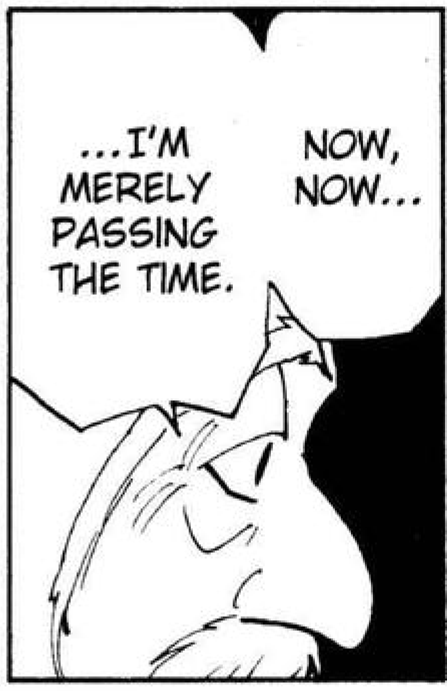
READ THIS WAY

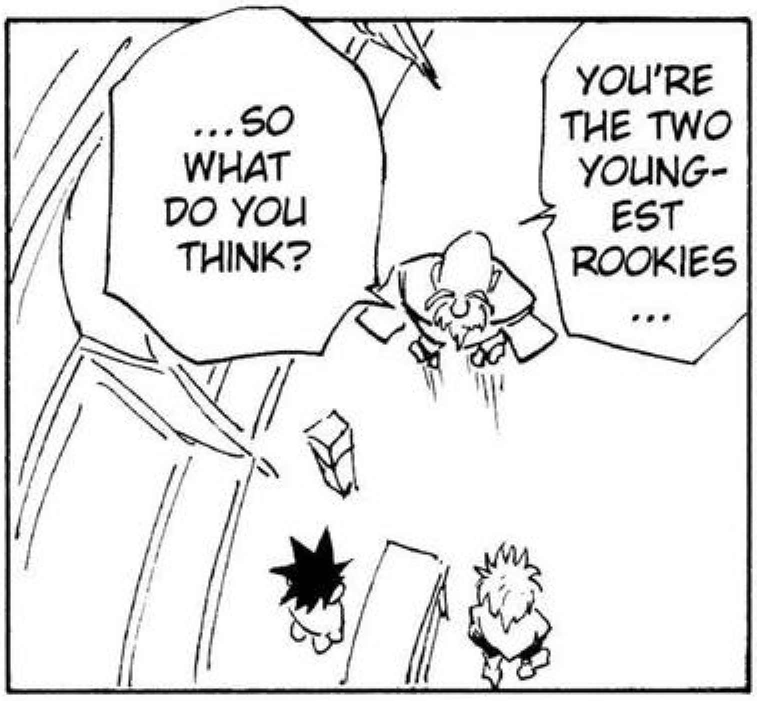


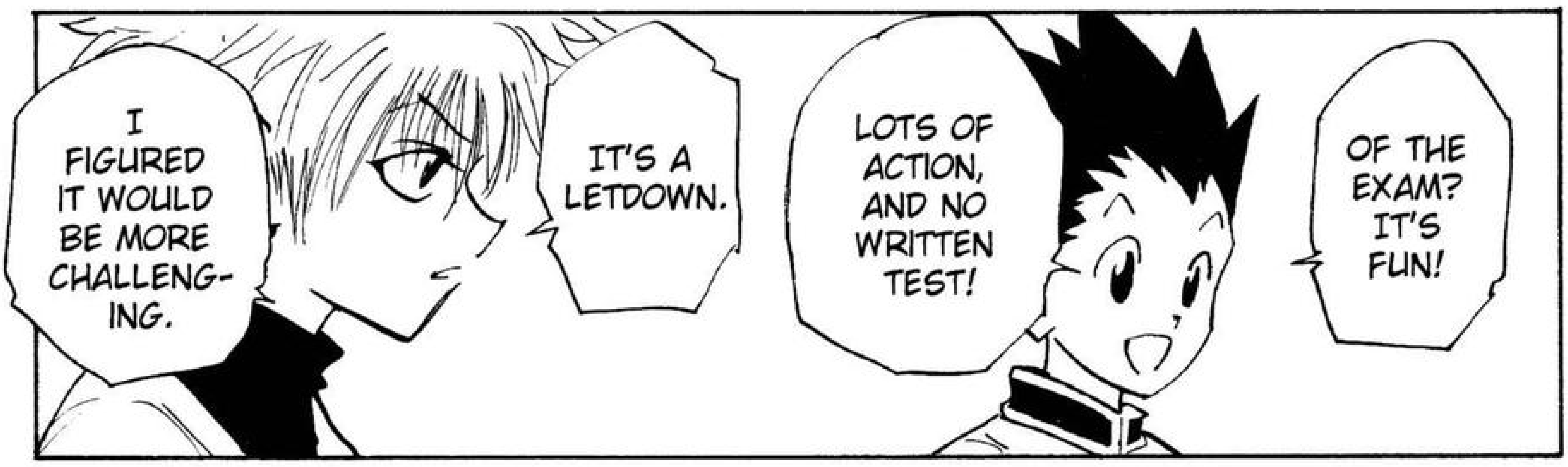

WHAT'S UP, BOYS?
?!
HUH?
YOU'RE FAST, OLD TIMER.
I WAS JUST STROLLING ALONG.
DO TELL?
DID YOU SEE ANYONE DOWN THAT WAY?
MM... NO.

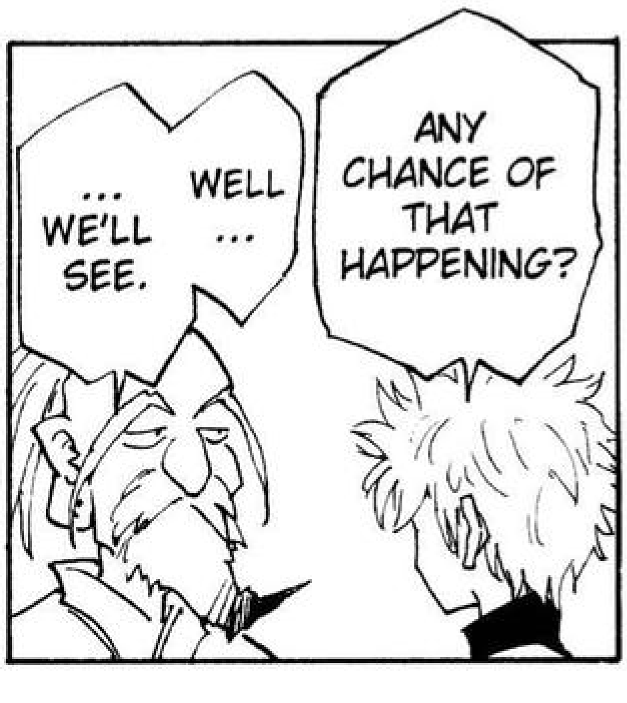

SNAP
CRACKLE
?

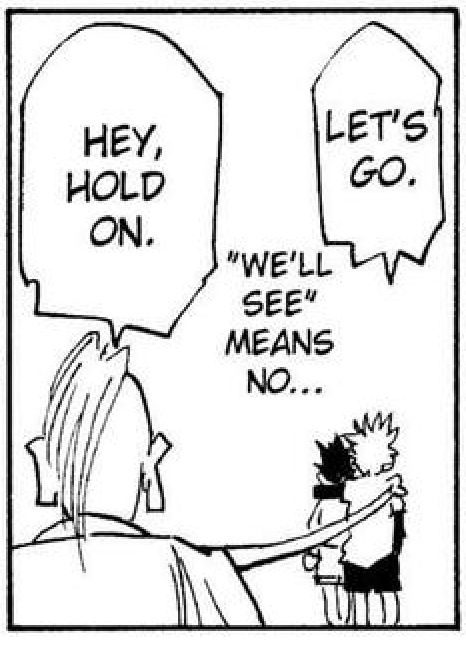

WHAT'S YOUR GAME?
KILLING TIME BEFORE THE FINAL PHASE...?

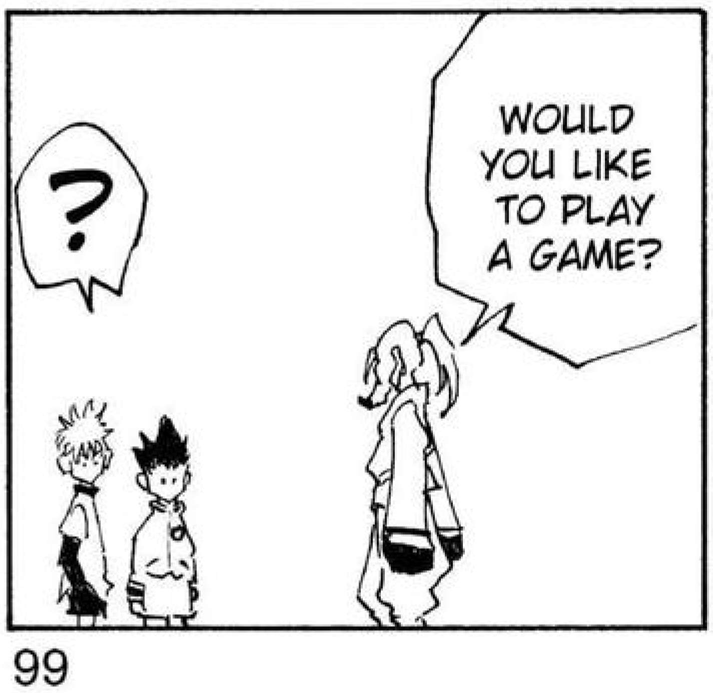

NOW, NOW...
...I'M MERELY PASSING THE TIME.

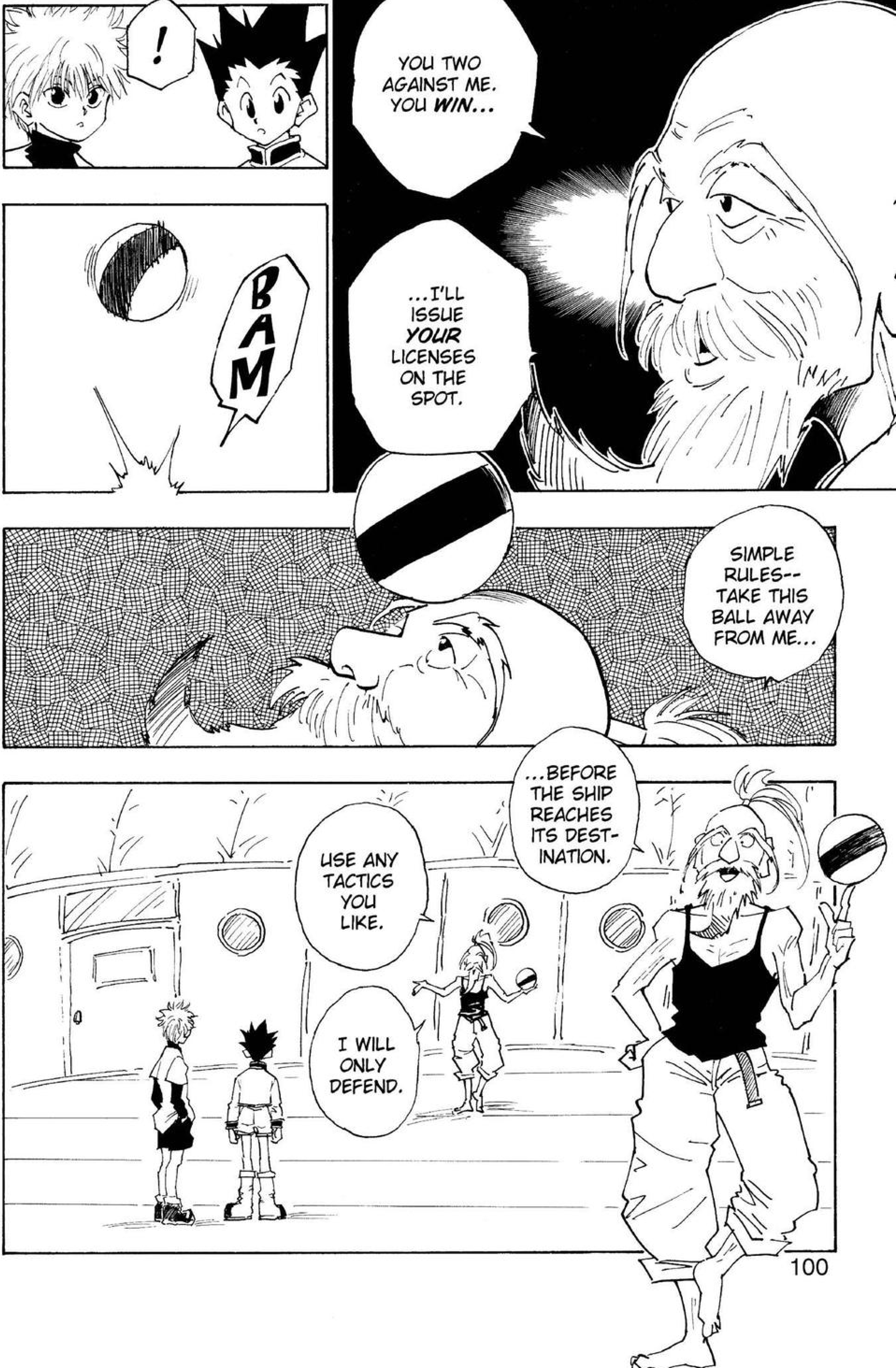

YOU'RE THE TWO YOUNGEST ROOKIES...
...SO WHAT DO YOU THINK?


OF THE EXAM? IT'S FUN!
LOTS OF ACTION, AND NO WRITTEN TEST!
IT'S A LETDOWN.
I FIGURED IT WOULD BE MORE CHALLENGING.

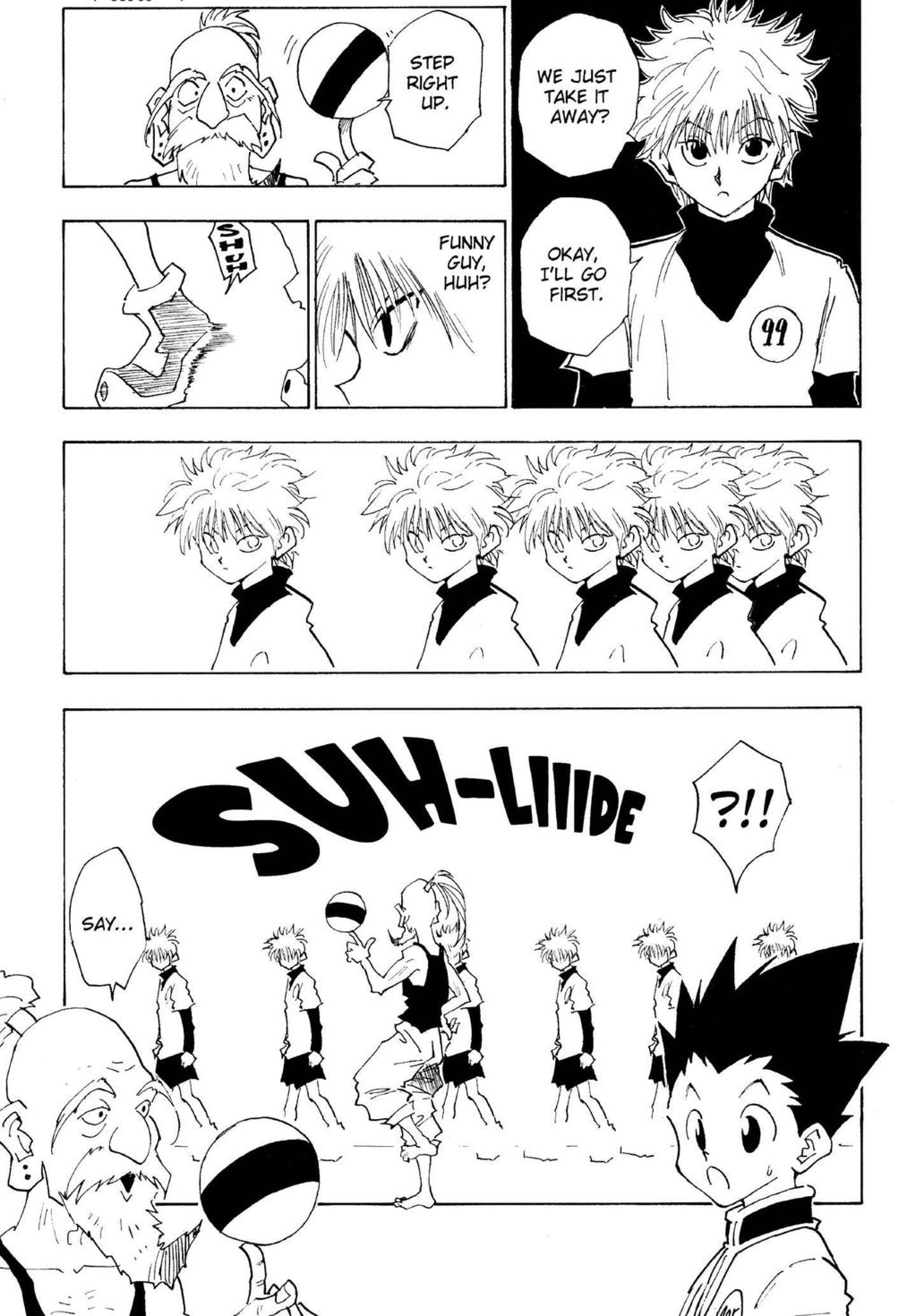

ANY CHANCE OF THAT HAPPENING?
WELL...
...WE'LL SEE.

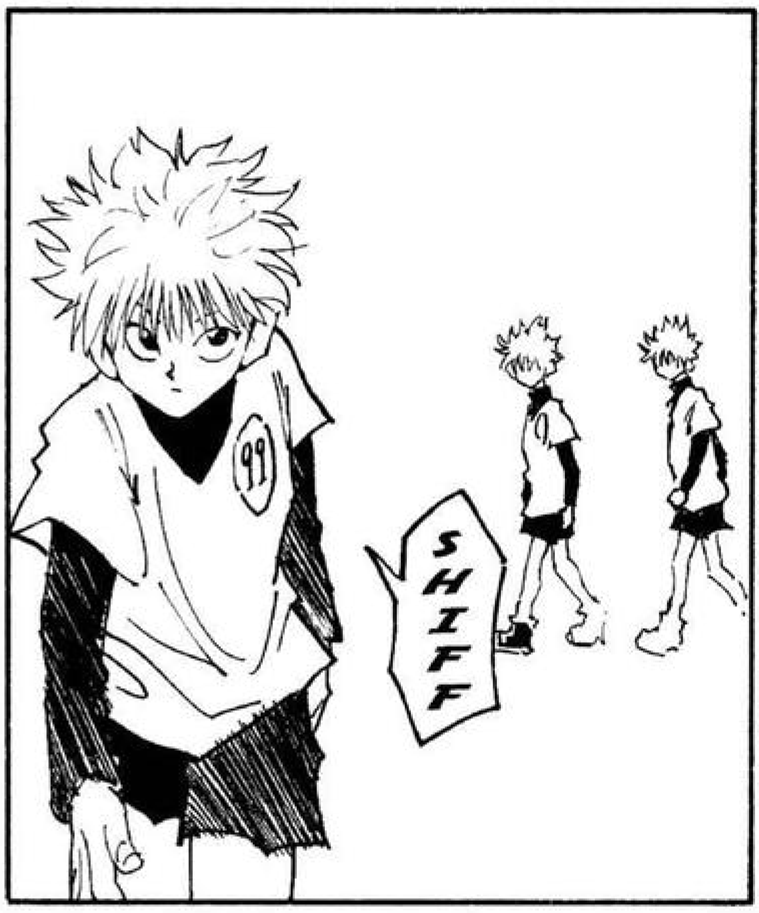

LET'S GO.
HEY, HOLD ON.
"WE'LL SEE" MEANS NO...

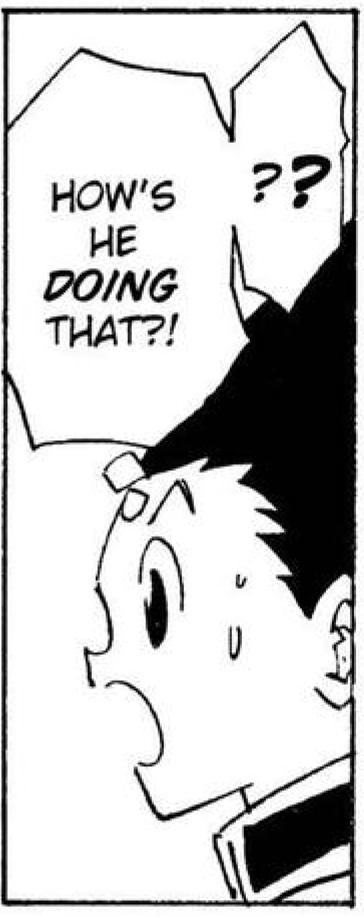

WOULD YOU LIKE TO PLAY A GAME?
?

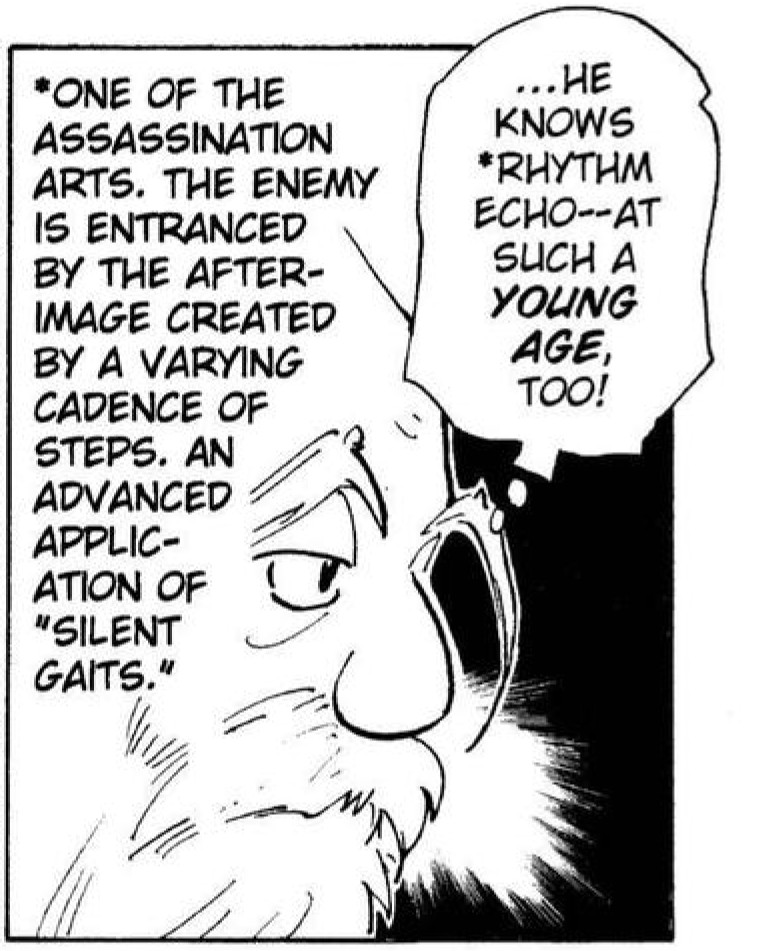

YOU TWO AGAINST ME. YOU **WIN...**
...I'LL ISSUE ***YOUR*** LICENSES ON THE SPOT.
!
BAM
SIMPLE RULES--TAKE THIS BALL AWAY FROM ME...
...BEFORE THE SHIP REACHES ITS DESTINATION.
USE ANY TACTICS YOU LIKE.
I WILL ONLY DEFEND.

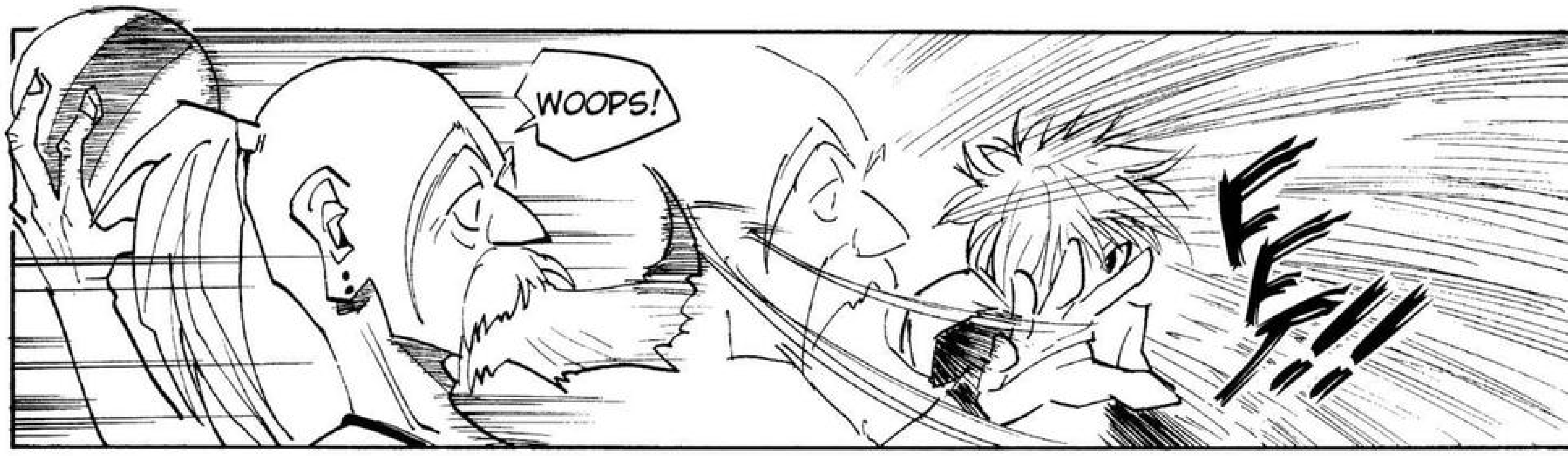
READ THIS WAY

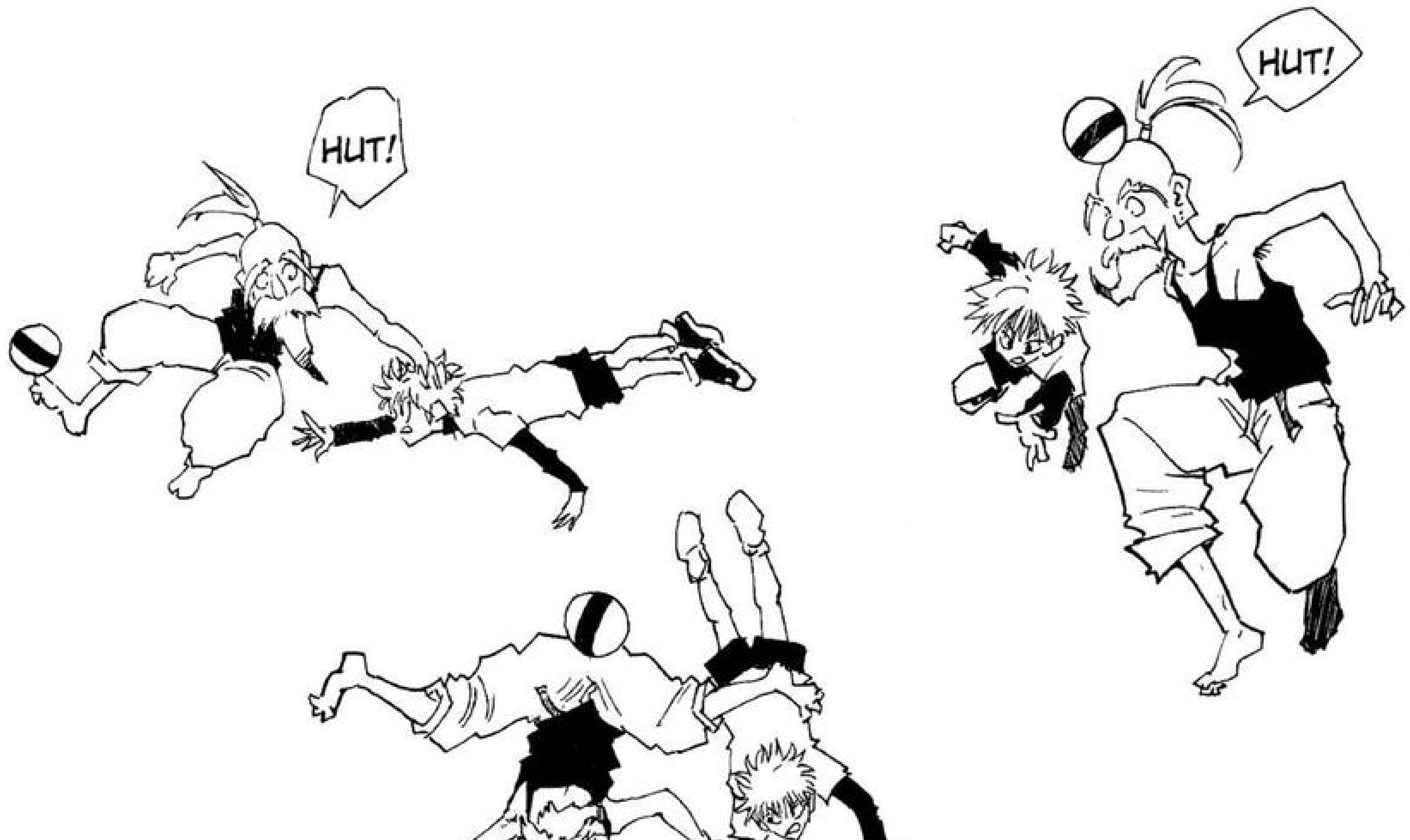

WE JUST TAKE IT AWAY?
OKAY, I'LL GO FIRST.
STEP RIGHT UP.
99
FUNNY GUY, HUH?
SHUH
SUH-LIIIDE
?!!
SAY...

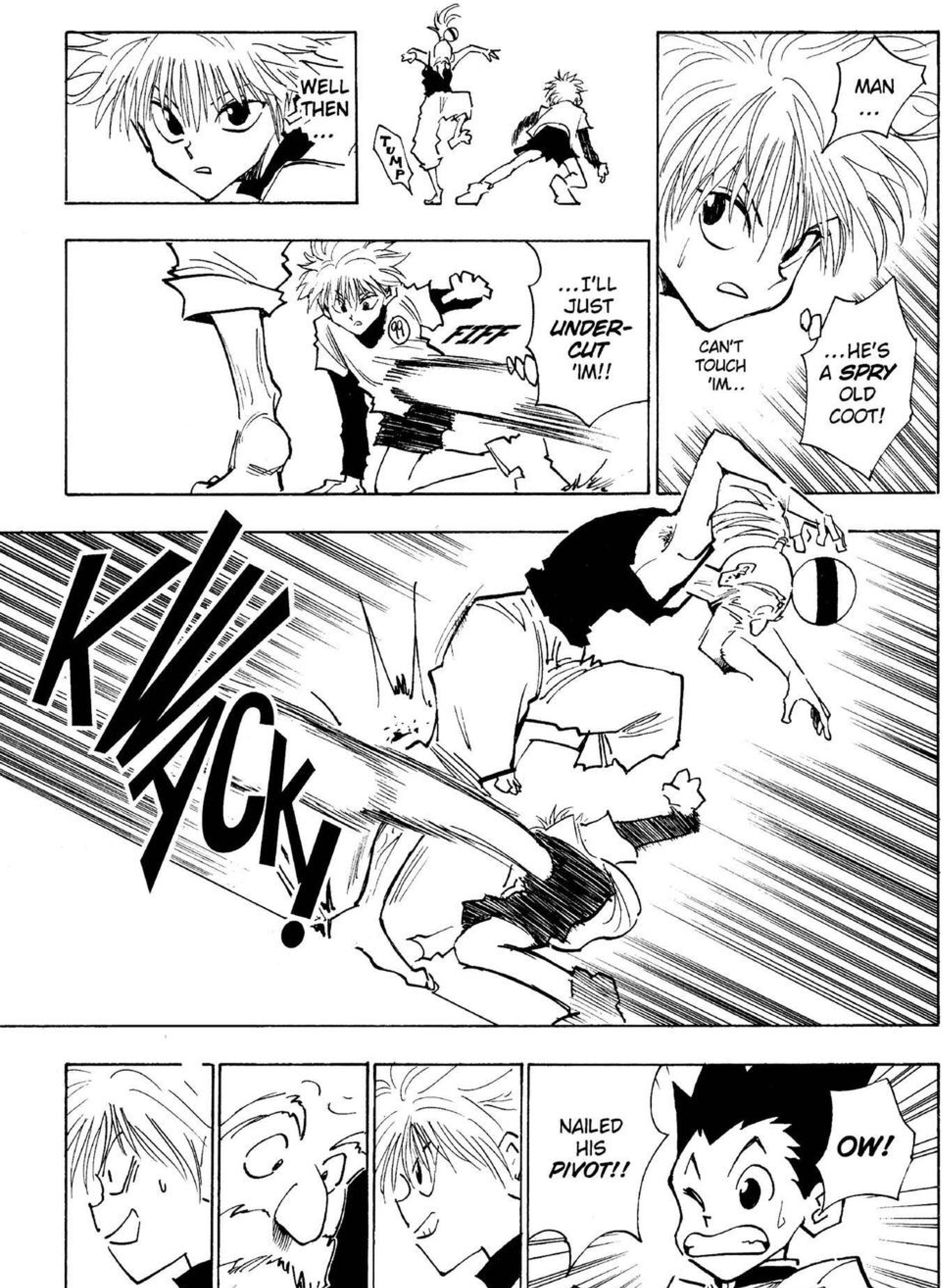

SHIFF

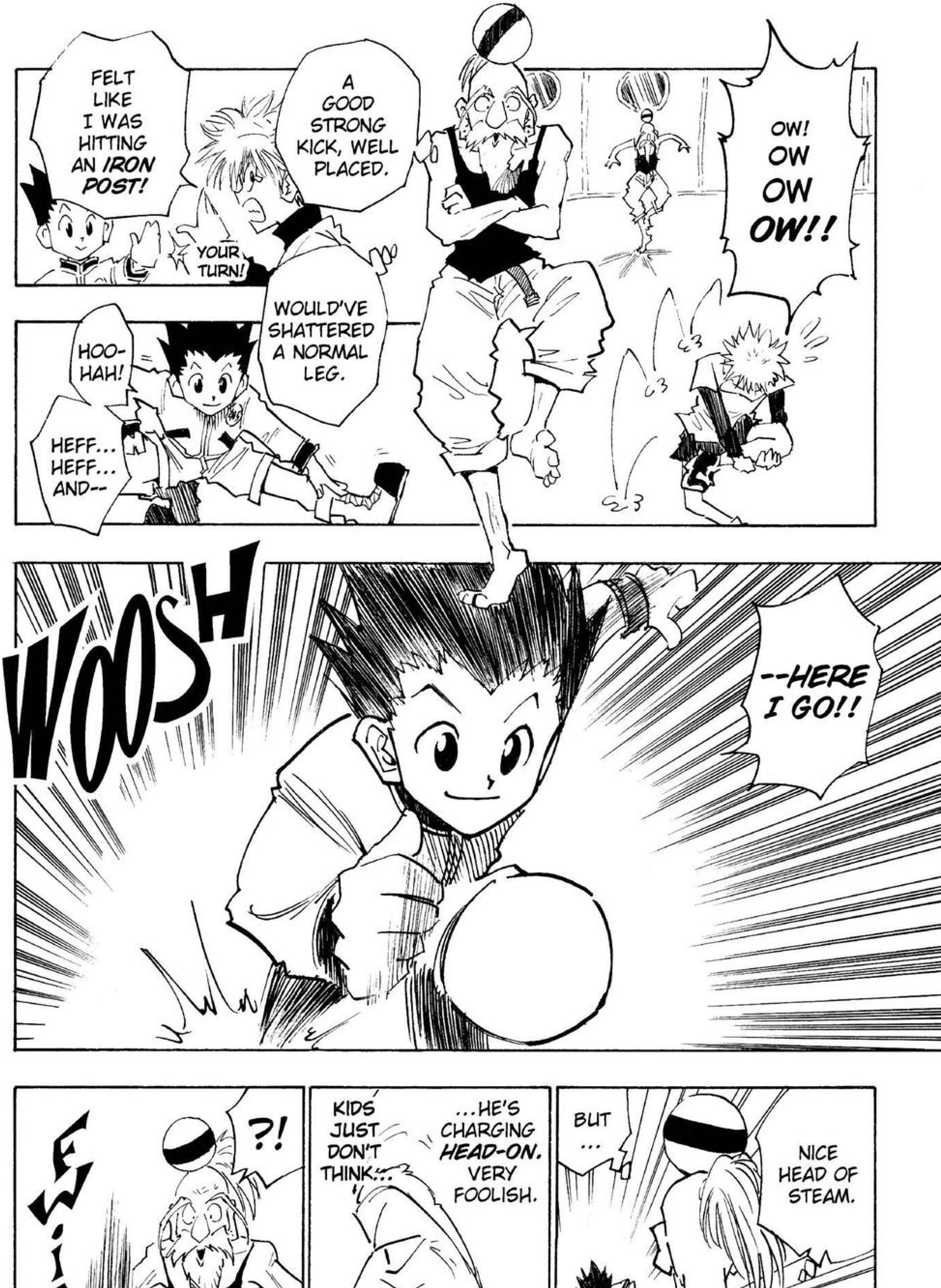

HOW'S HE *DOING* THAT?!
??

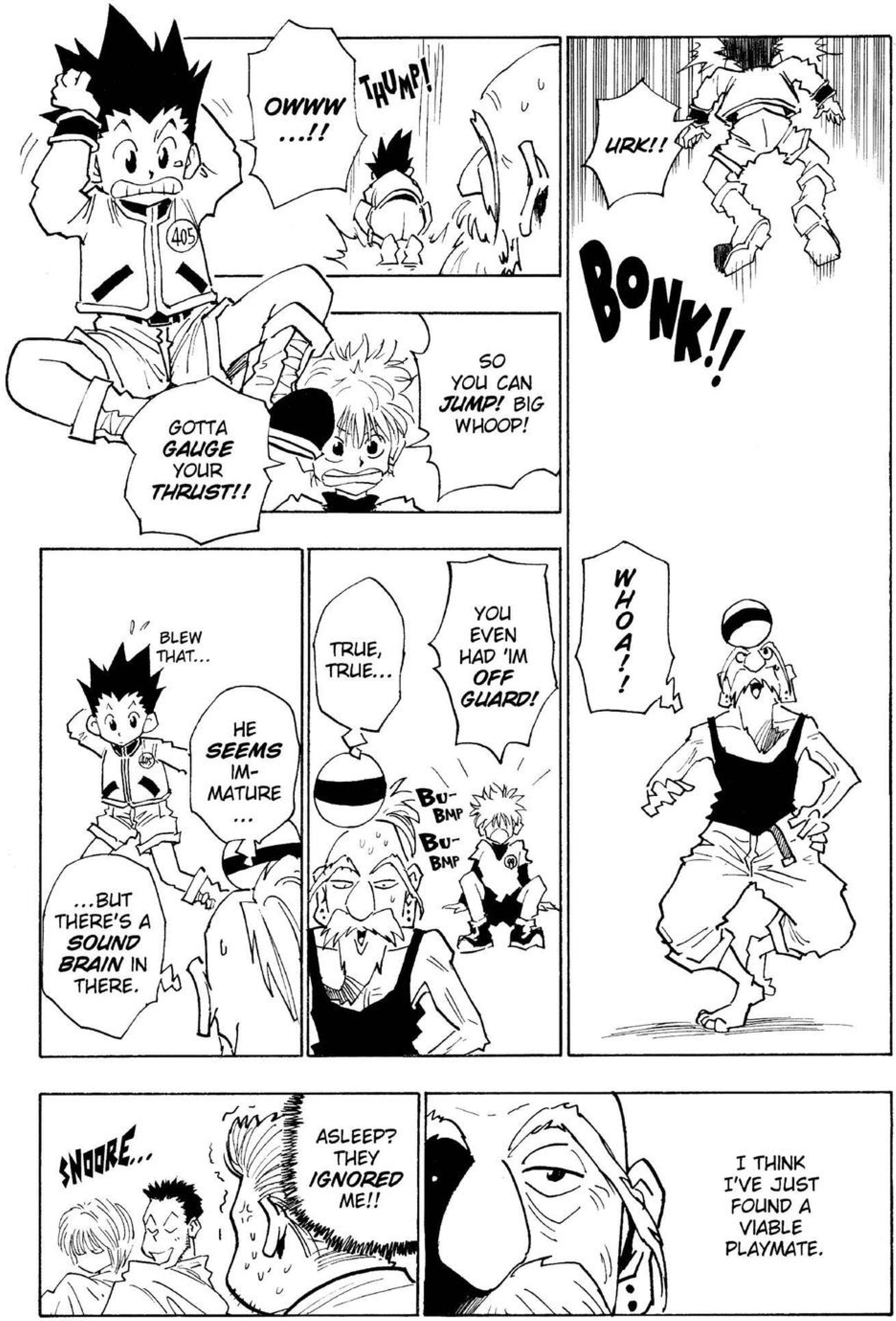

...HE KNOWS *RHYTHM ECHO--AT SUCH A ***YOUNG AGE***, TOO!
*ONE OF THE ASSASSINATION ARTS. THE ENEMY IS ENTRANCED BY THE AFTER-IMAGE CREATED BY A VARYING CADENCE OF STEPS. AN ADVANCED APPLICATION OF "SILENT GAITS."


WOOPS!
FFF!!


HUT!
HUT!


MAN ...
...HE'S A *SPRY* OLD COOT!
CAN'T TOUCH 'IM...
TUMP
WELL THEN ...
...I'LL JUST *UNDER-CUT* 'IM!!
FIFF
KWACK!
OW!
NAILED HIS *PIVOT*!!

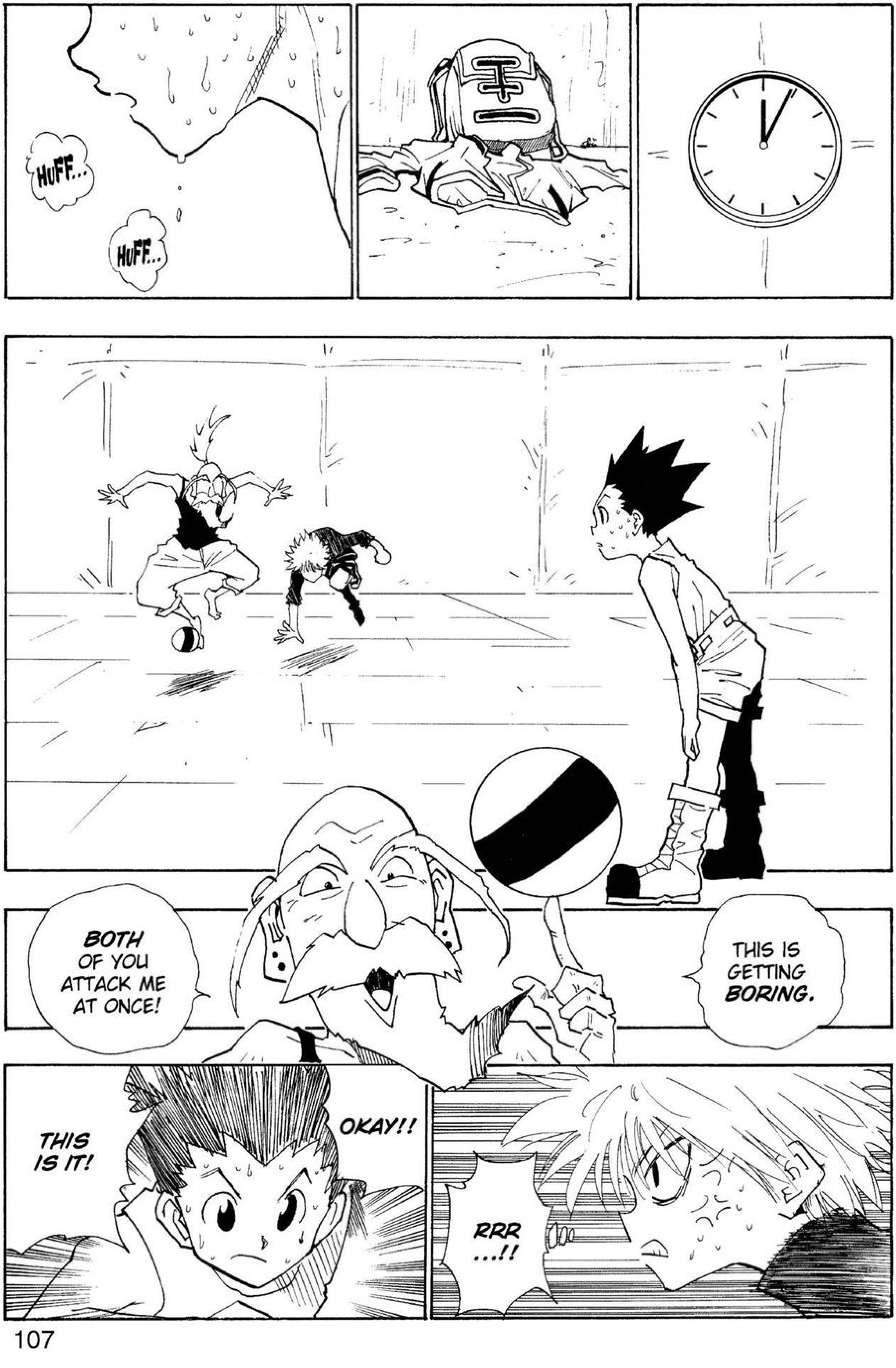

OW! OW OW OW!!
A GOOD STRONG KICK, WELL PLACED.
WOULD'VE SHATTERED A NORMAL LEG.
FELT LIKE I WAS HITTING AN *IRON POST!*
YOUR TURN!
HOO-HAH!
HEFF... HEFF... AND--
--HERE I GO!!
WOOSH
BUT...
NICE HEAD OF STEAM.
...HE'S CHARGING *HEAD-ON.* VERY FOOLISH.
KIDS JUST DON'T THINK...
?!
FWIT

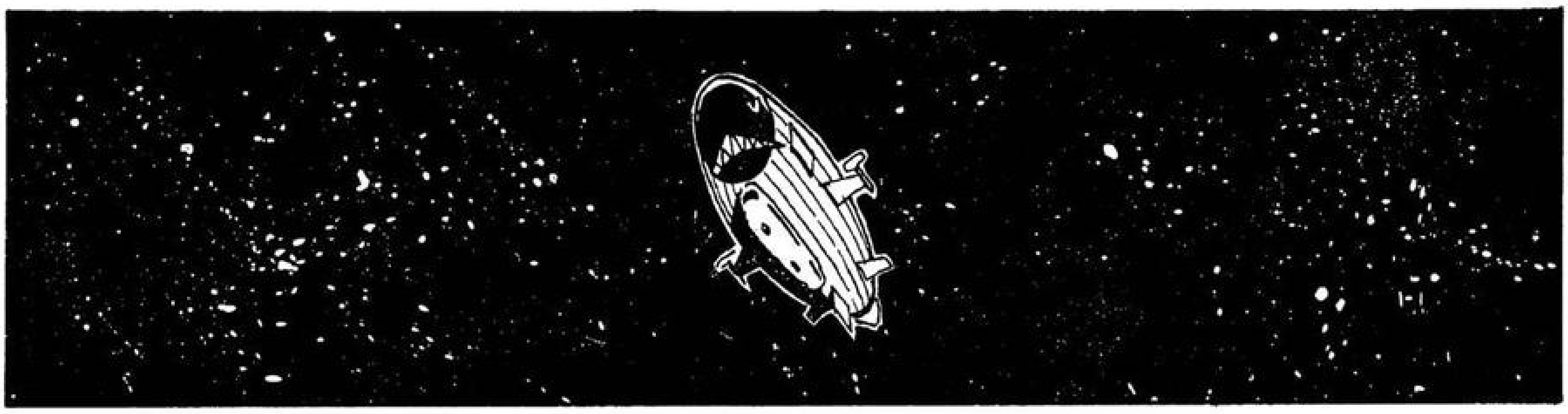

URK!!
BONK!!
OWWW...!!
THUMP!
SO YOU CAN JUMP! BIG WHOOP!
GOTTA GAUGE YOUR THRUST!!
WHOA!!
YOU EVEN HAD 'IM OFF GUARD!
TRUE, TRUE...
BU-BMP
BU-BMP
BLEW THAT...
HE SEEMS IMMATURE...
...BUT THERE'S A SOUND BRAIN IN THERE.
I THINK I'VE JUST FOUND A VIABLE PLAYMATE.
ASLEEP? THEY IGNORED ME!!
SNOORE...

Netero

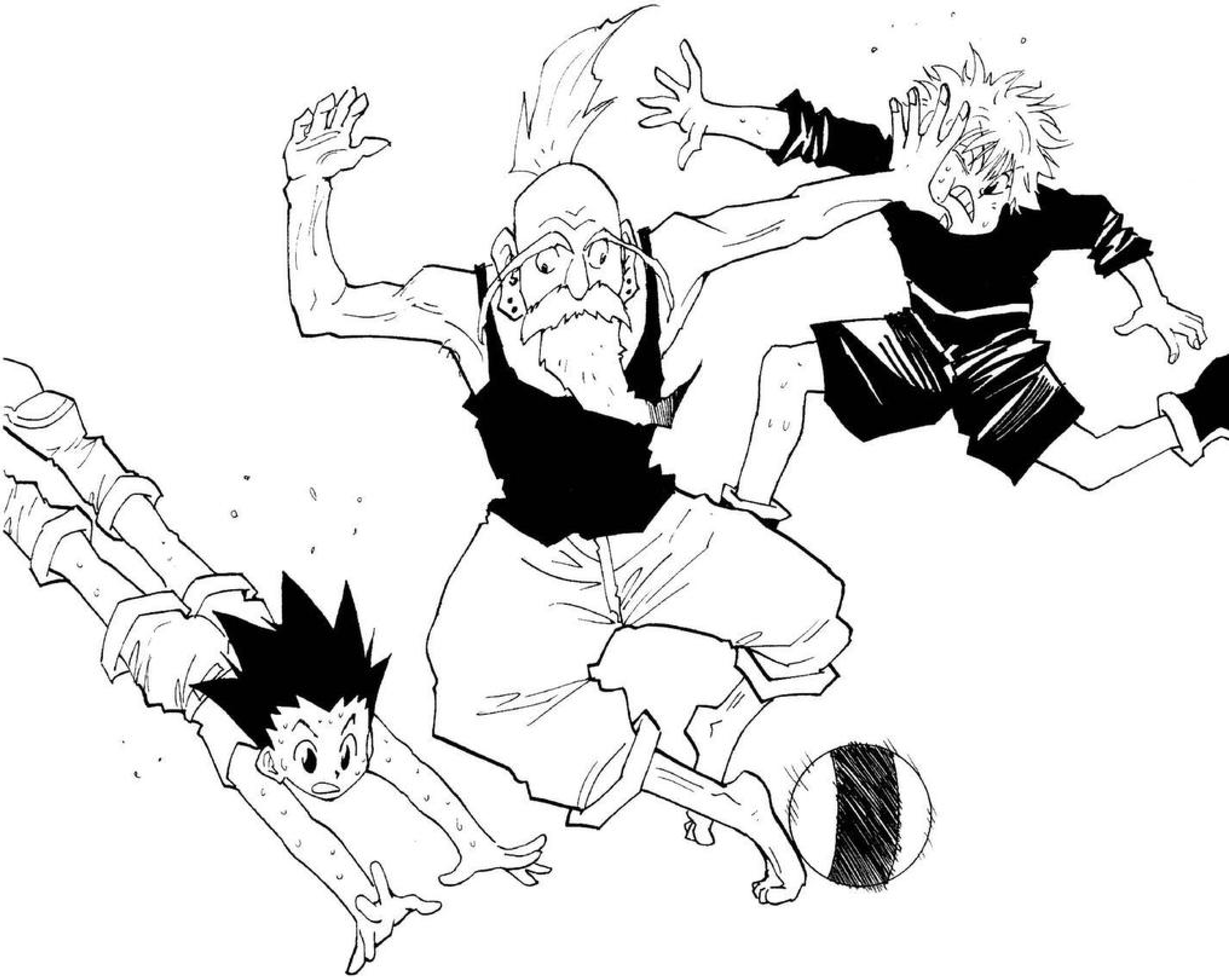
Chapter 14

A Game at Midnight, part 2

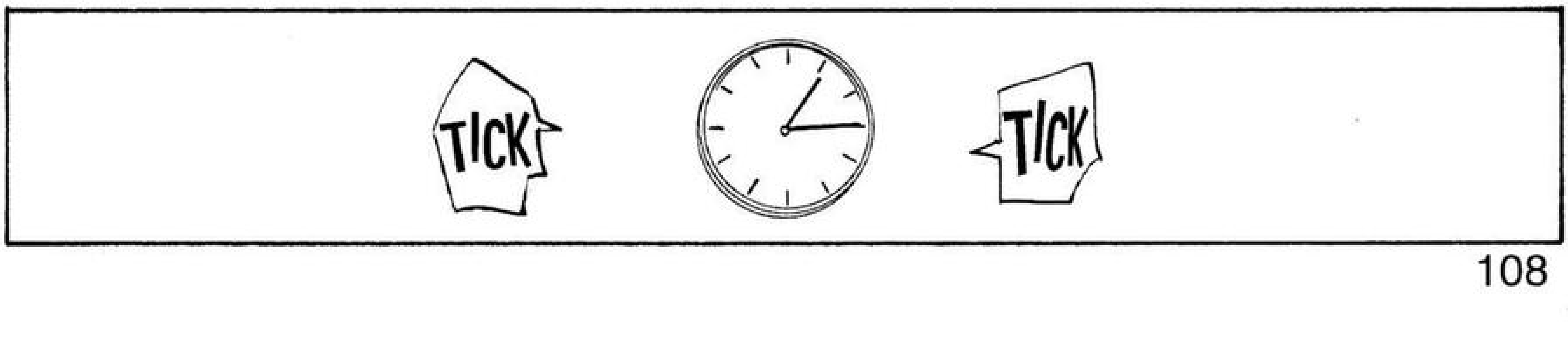

HUFF...
HUFF...
THIS IS GETTING *BORING.*
BOTH OF YOU ATTACK ME AT ONCE!
RRR ...!!
OKAY!!
THIS IS IT!



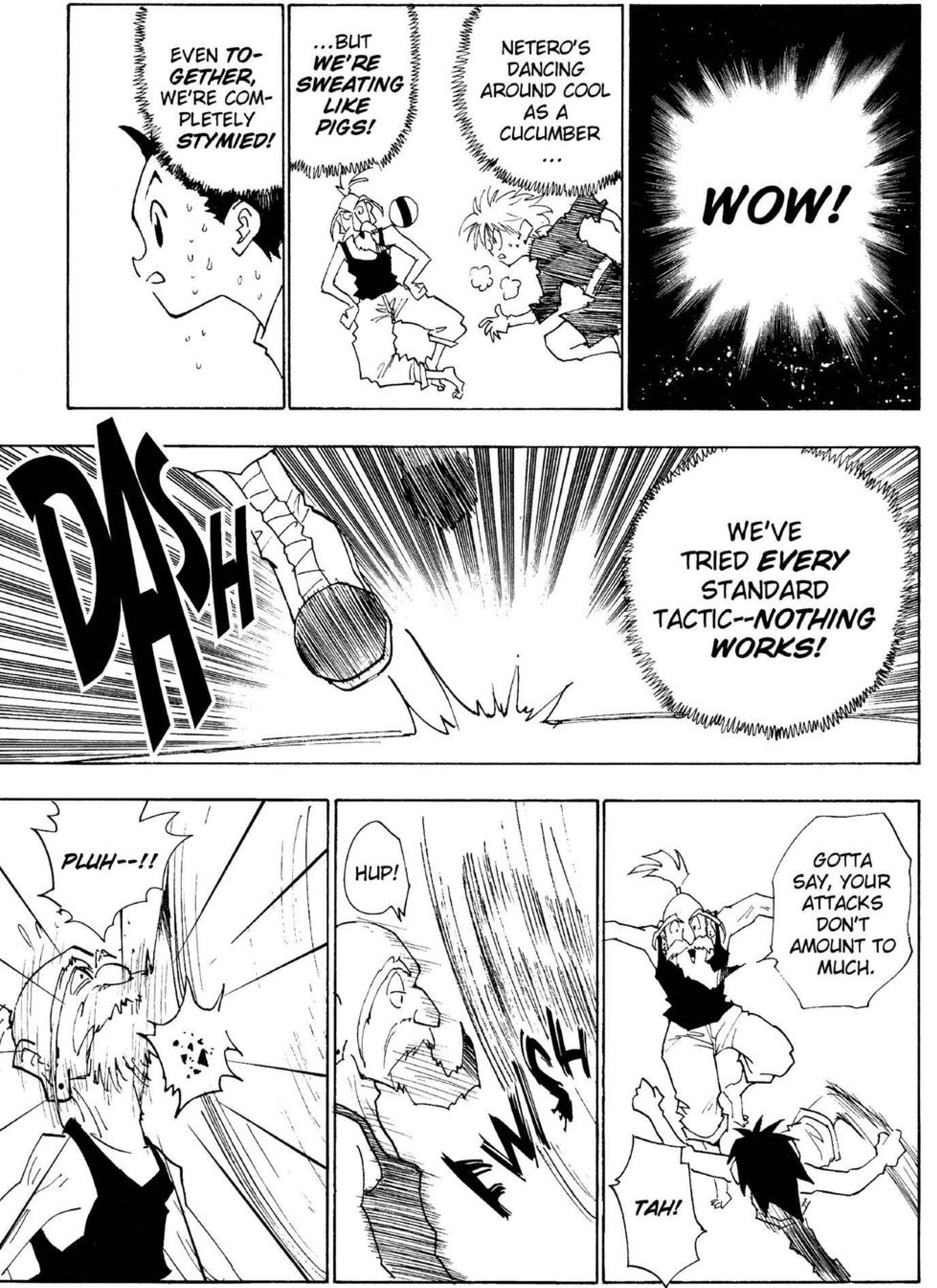
Chapter 14

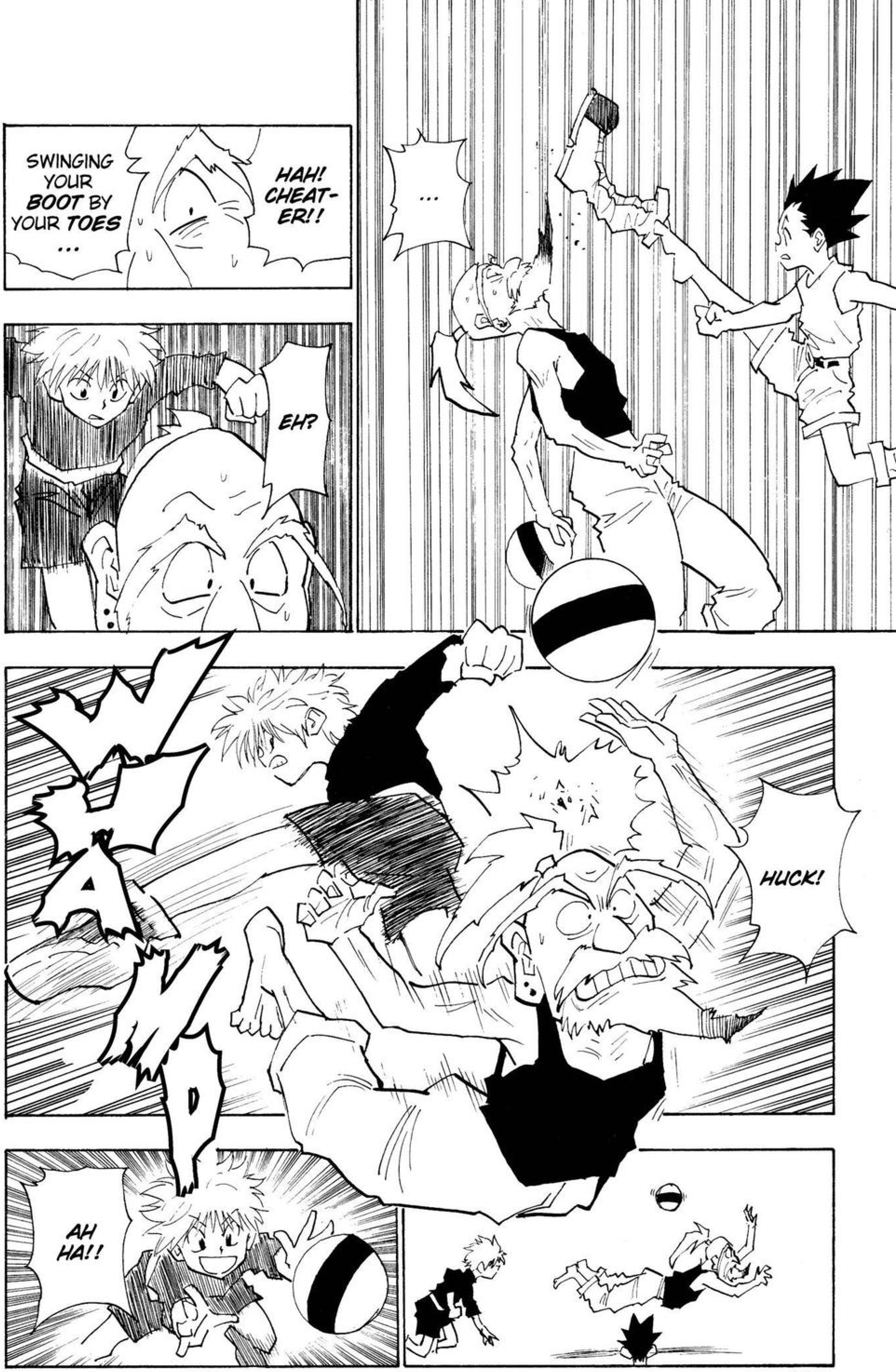


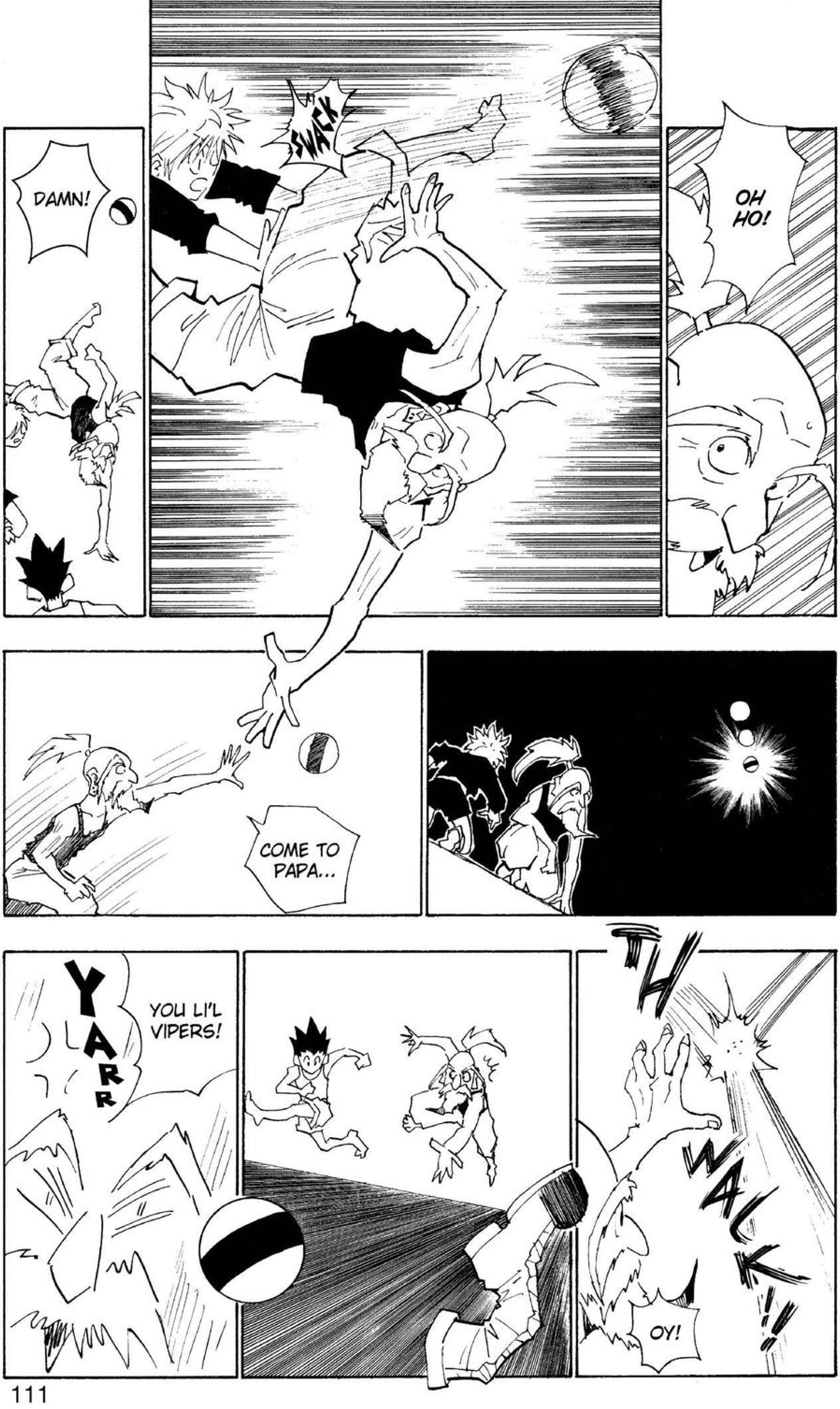
A Game at Midnight, part 2

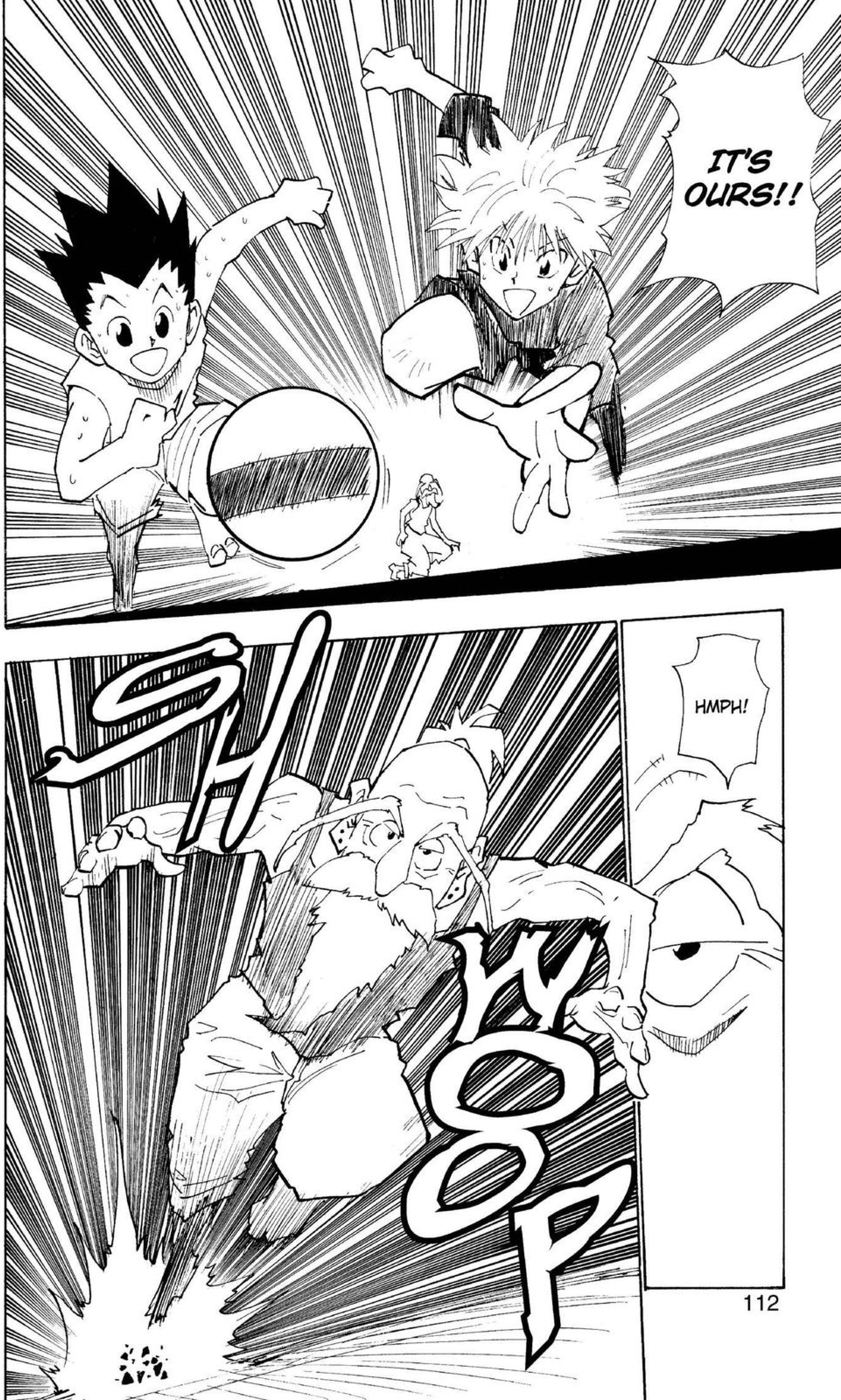


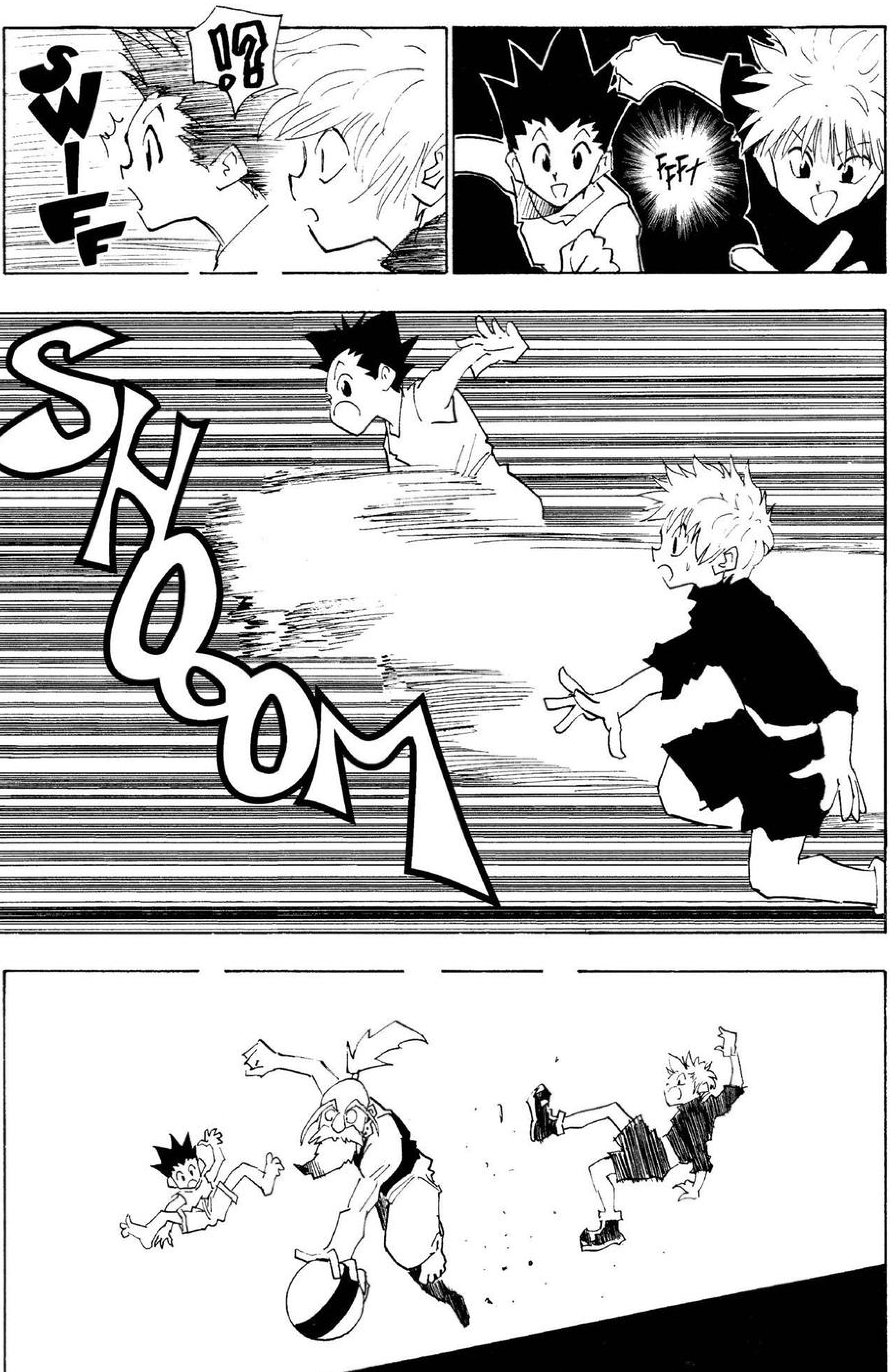
READ THIS WAY

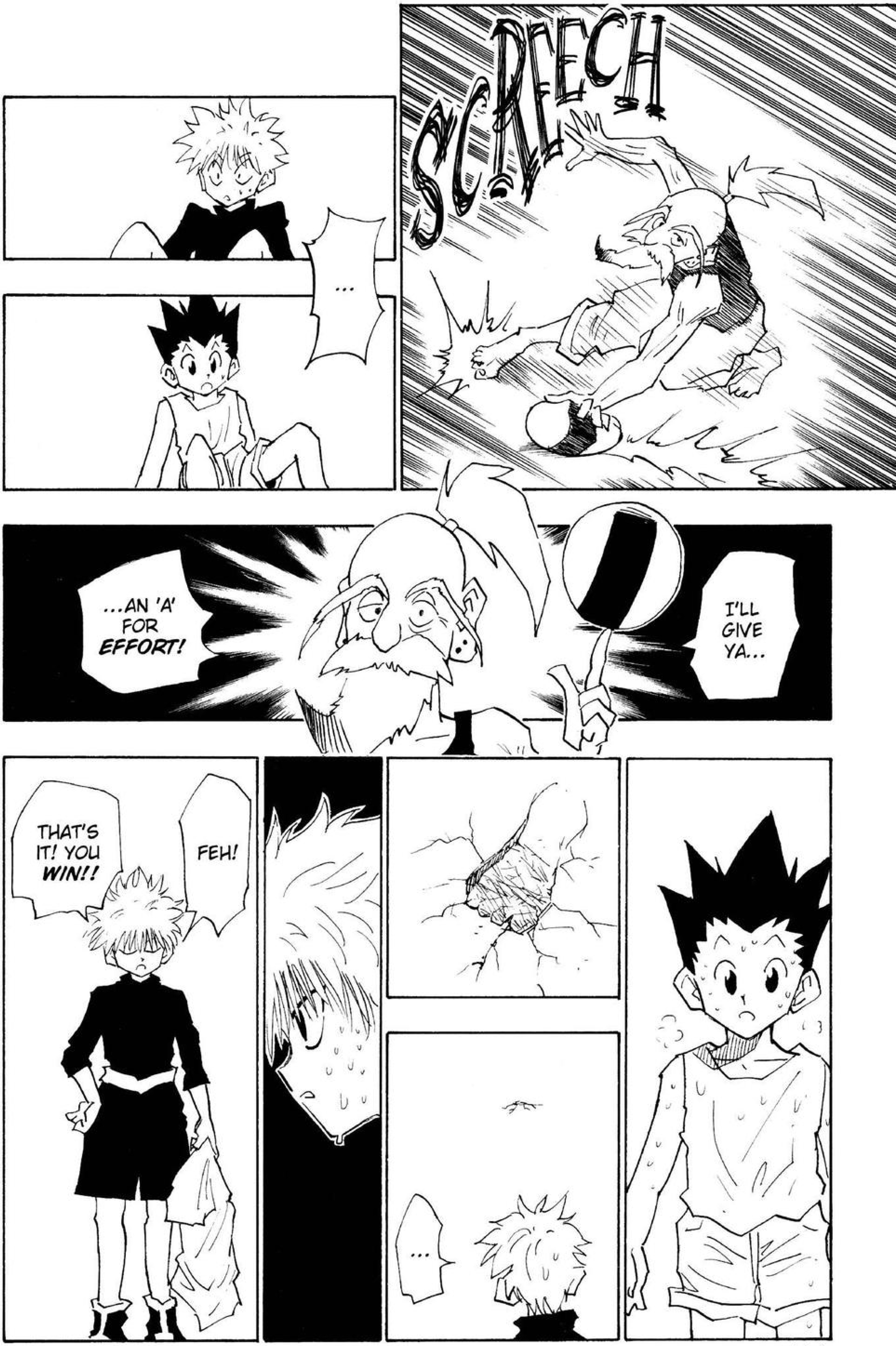

WOW!
NETERO'S DANCING AROUND COOL AS A CUCUMBER ...
...BUT WE'RE SWEATING LIKE PIGS!
EVEN TOGETHER, WE'RE COMPLETELY STYMIED!
WE'VE TRIED EVERY STANDARD TACTIC--NOTHING WORKS!
DASH
GOTTA SAY, YOUR ATTACKS DON'T AMOUNT TO MUCH.
TAH!
HUP!
FWISH
PLUH--!!


...
HAH! CHEATER!!
SWINGING YOUR BOOT BY YOUR TOES ...
EH?
HUCK!
WHAMD
AH HA!!

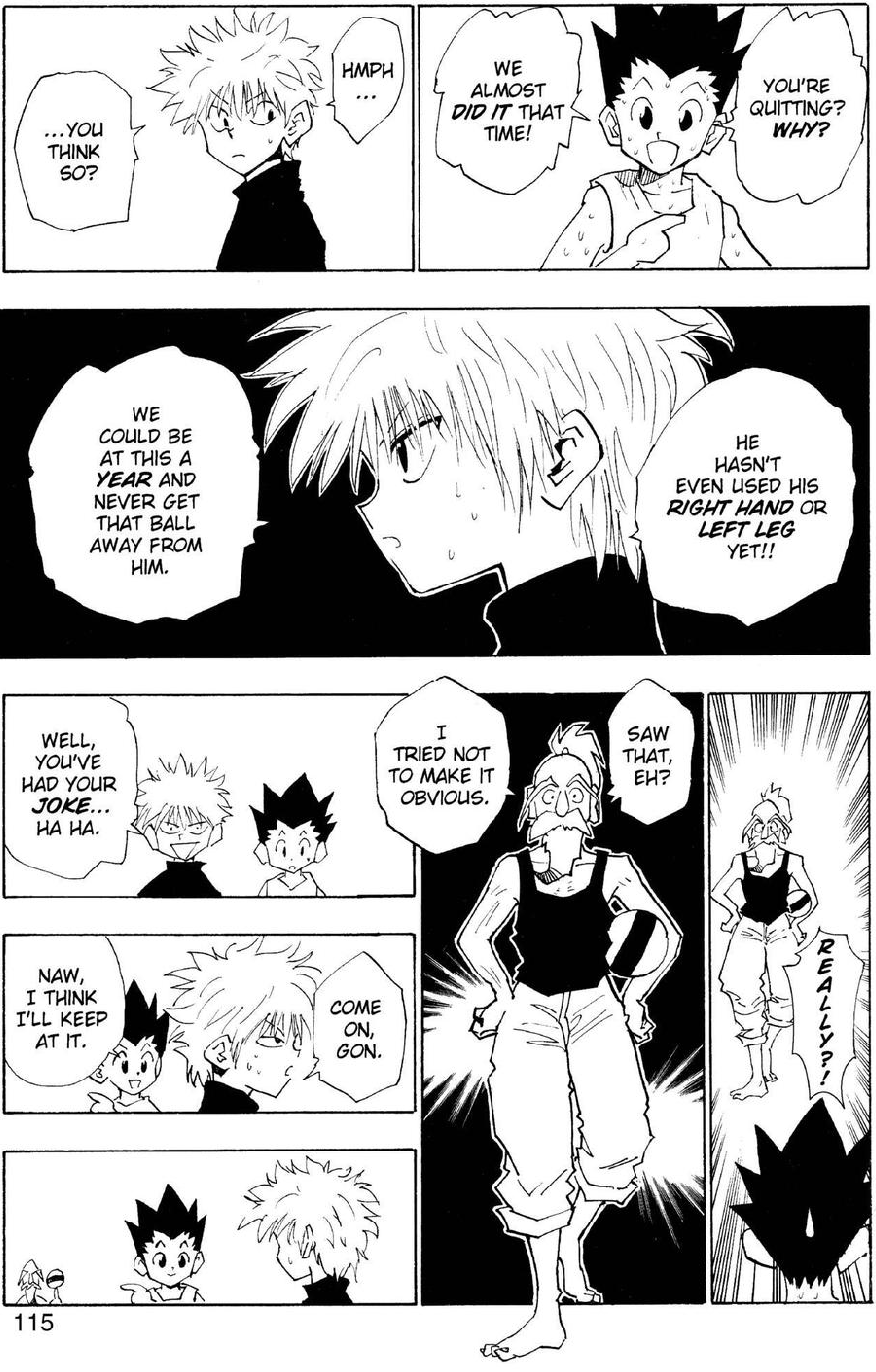

OH HO!
SWACK
DAMN!
COME TO PAPA...
THWACK!!
OY!
YARR
YOU LI'L VIPERS!

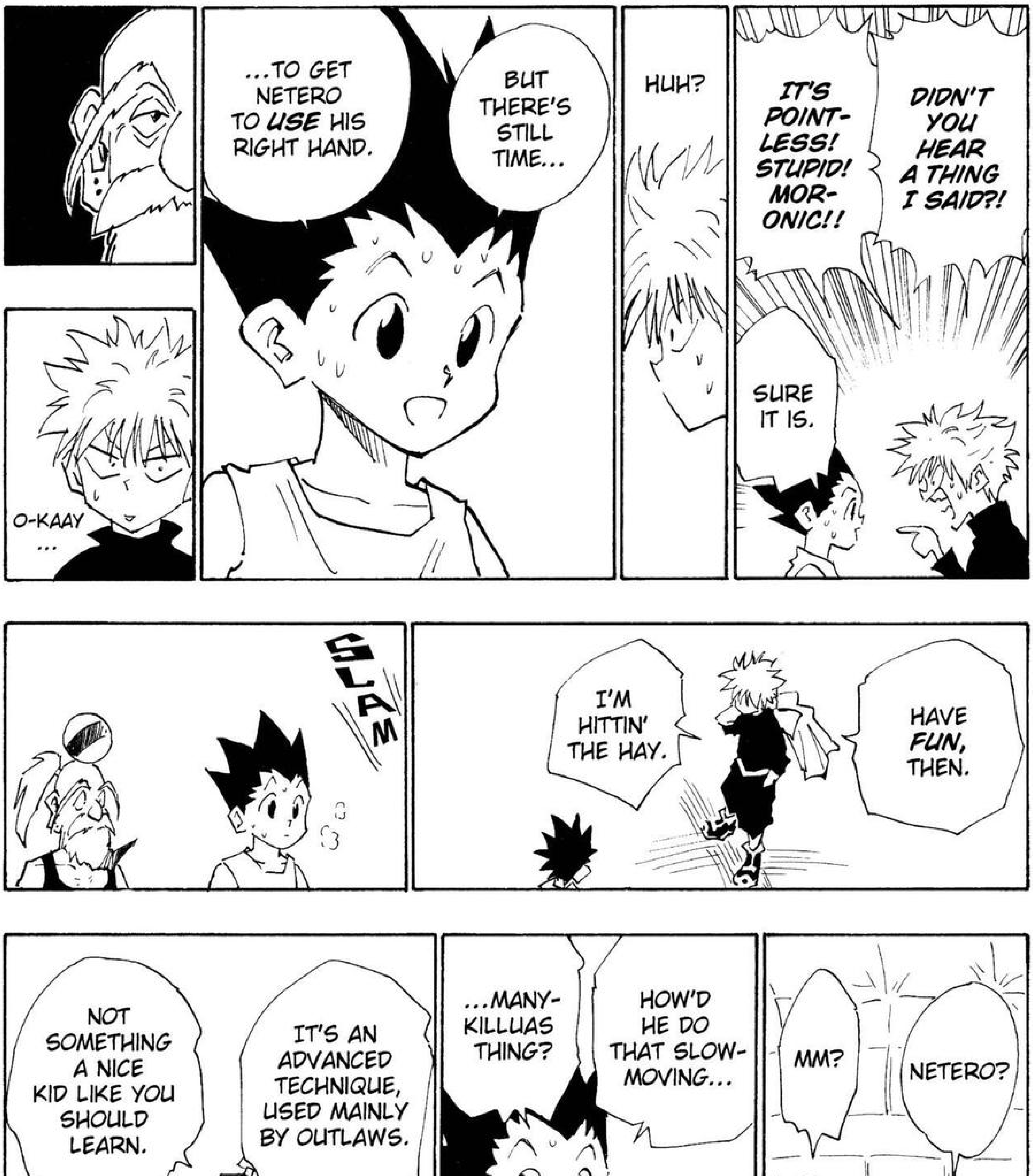

IT'S OURS!!
HMPH!
SHYOOP

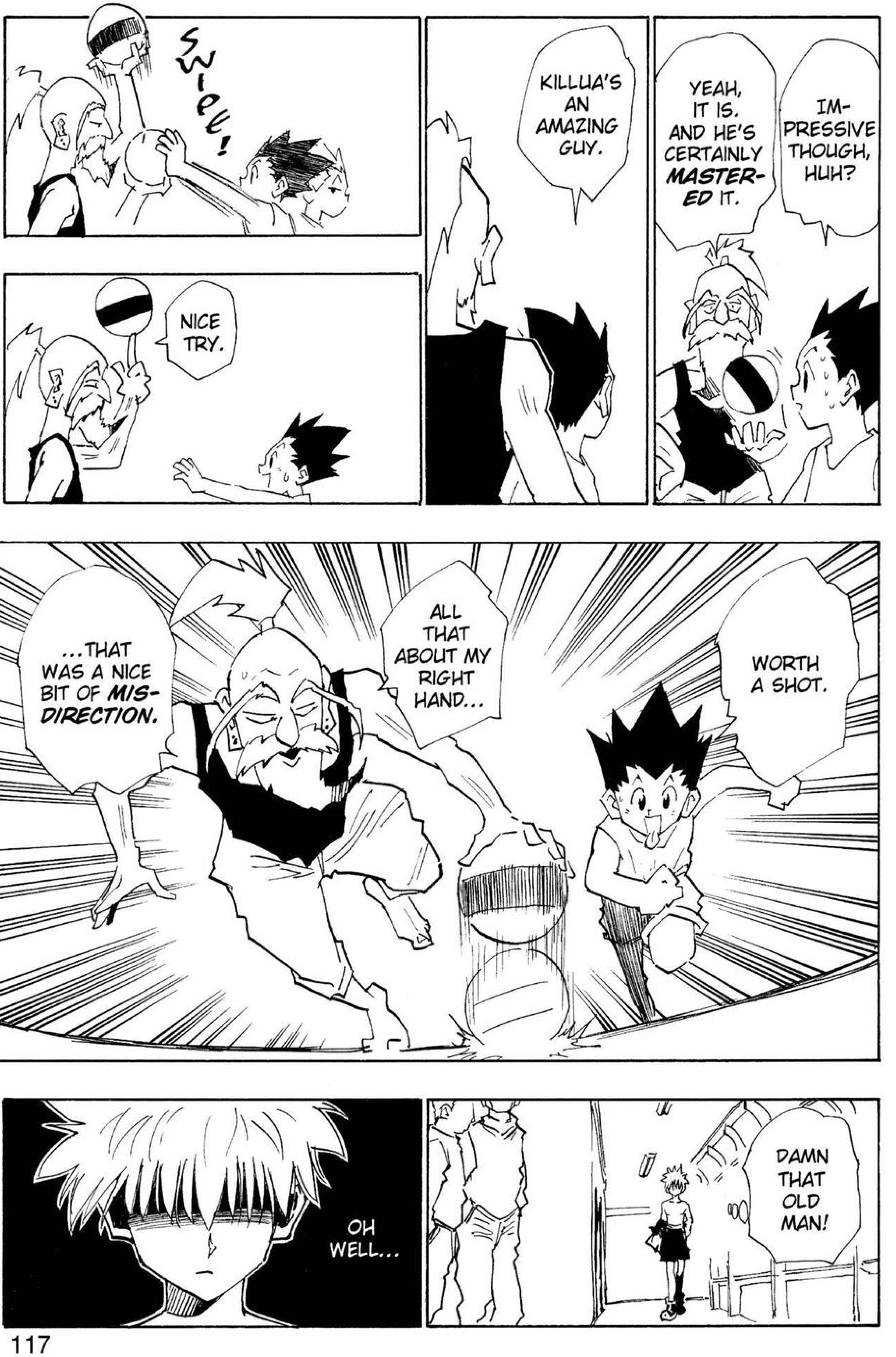

FFFT
SWIFF
!?
SHOOOM

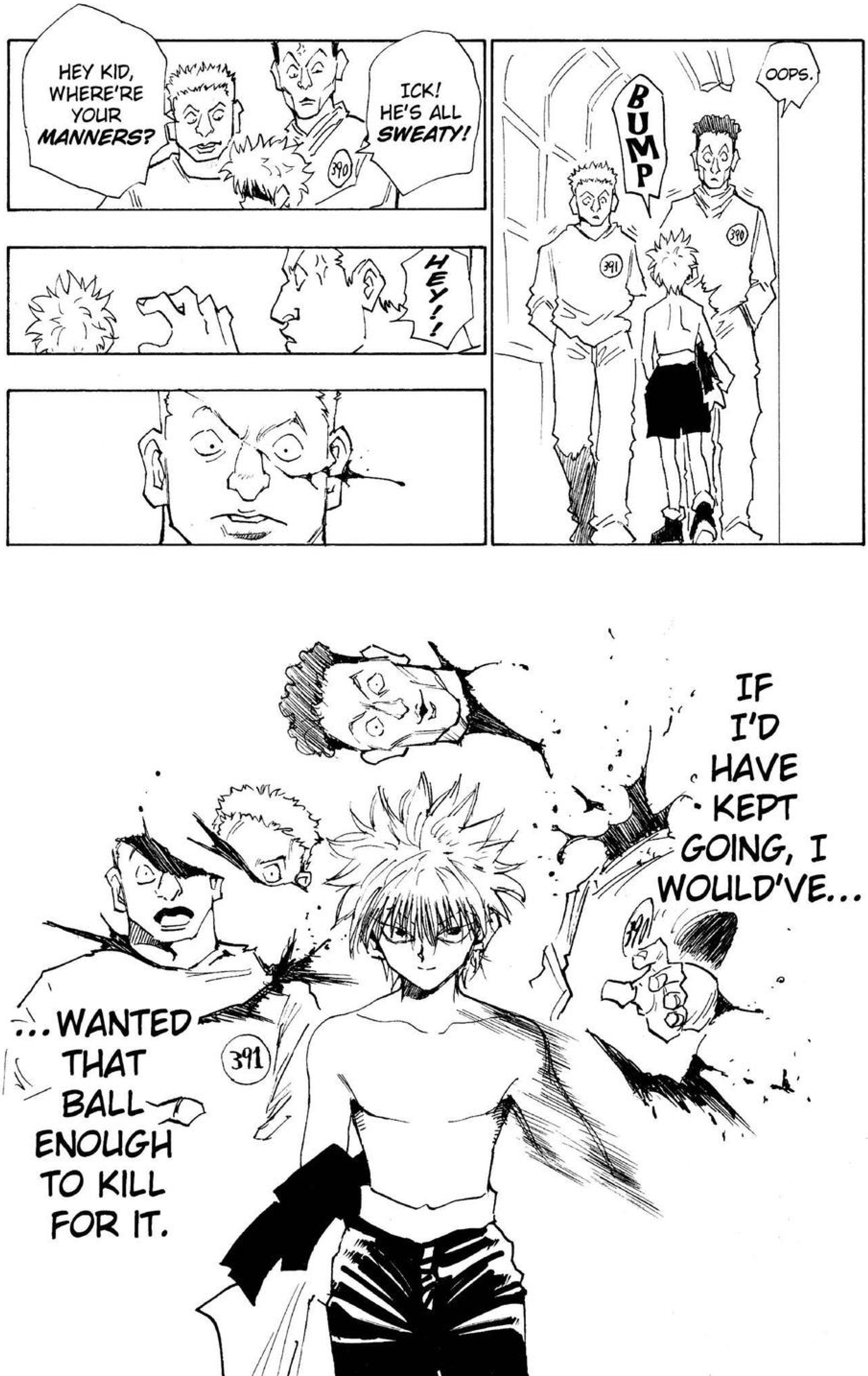

SCREECH
...
I'LL GIVE YA...
...AN 'A' FOR EFFORT!
...
FEH!
THAT'S IT! YOU WIN!!

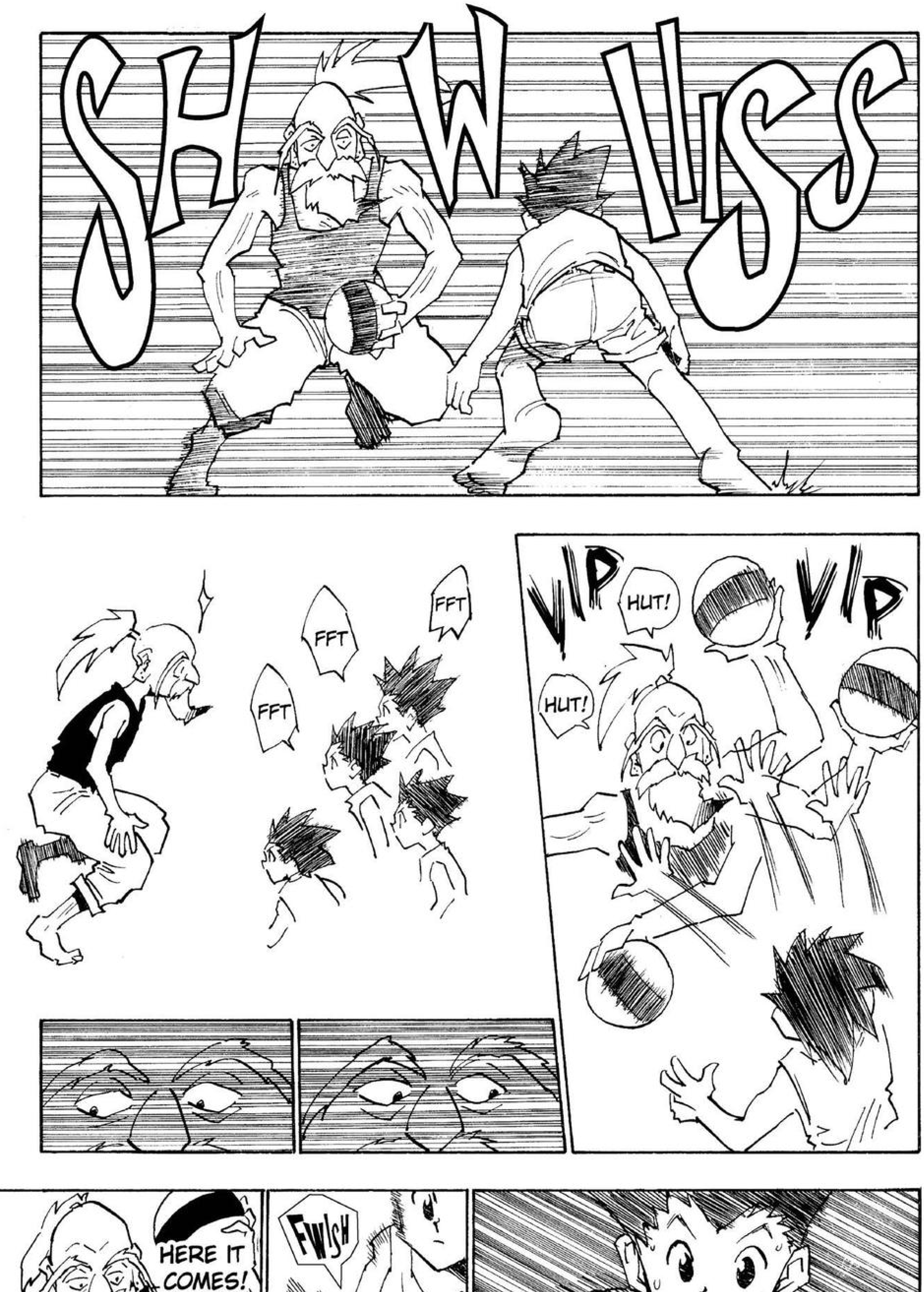
READ THIS WAY

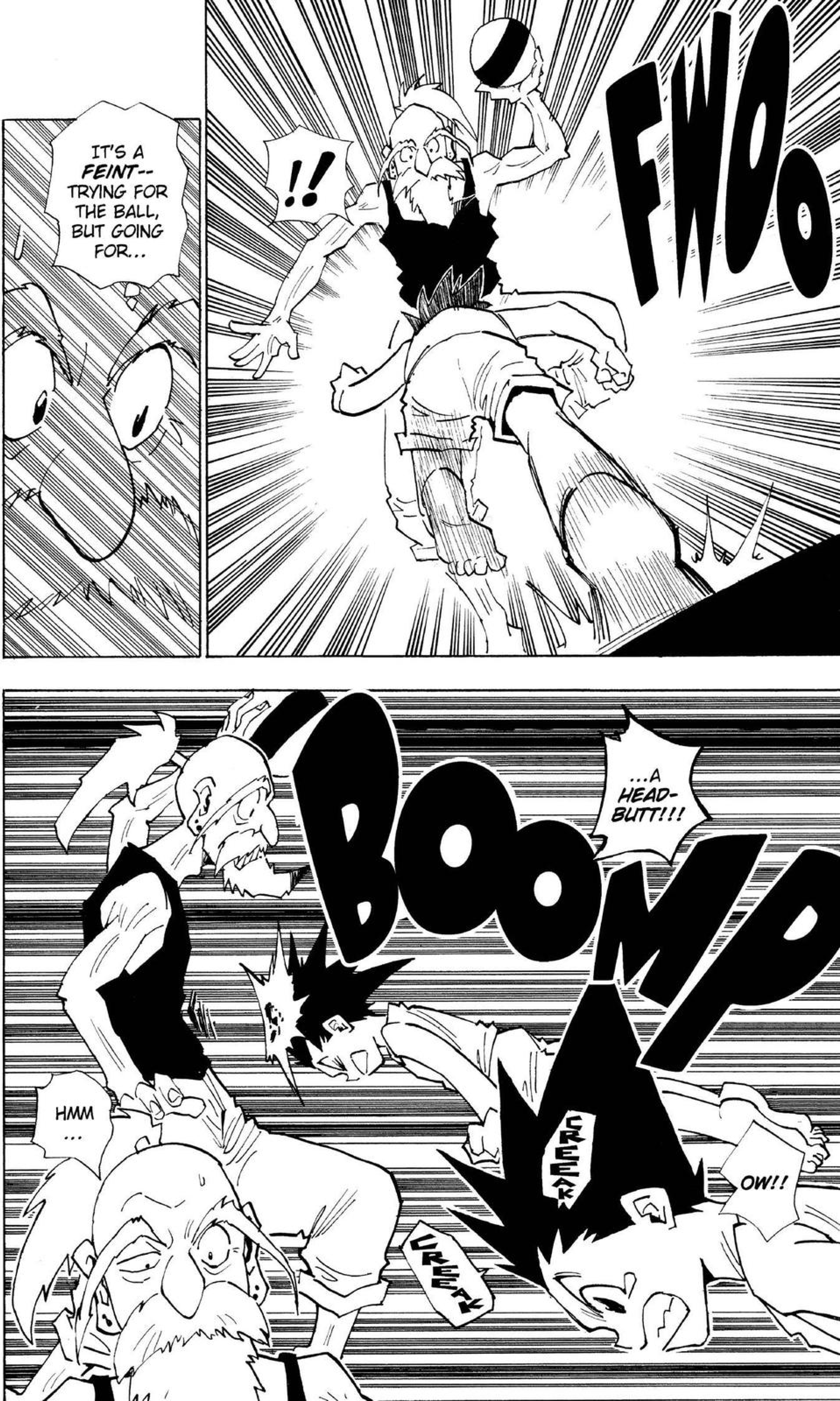

YOU'RE QUITTING? *WHY?*
WE ALMOST *DID IT* THAT TIME!
HMPH ...
...YOU THINK SO?
HE HASN'T EVEN USED HIS *RIGHT HAND* OR *LEFT LEG* YET!!
WE COULD BE AT THIS A *YEAR* AND NEVER GET THAT BALL AWAY FROM HIM.
REALLY?!
SAW THAT, EH?
I TRIED NOT TO MAKE IT OBVIOUS.
WELL, YOU'VE HAD YOUR *JOKE*... HA HA.
COME ON, GON.
NAW, I THINK I'LL KEEP AT IT.

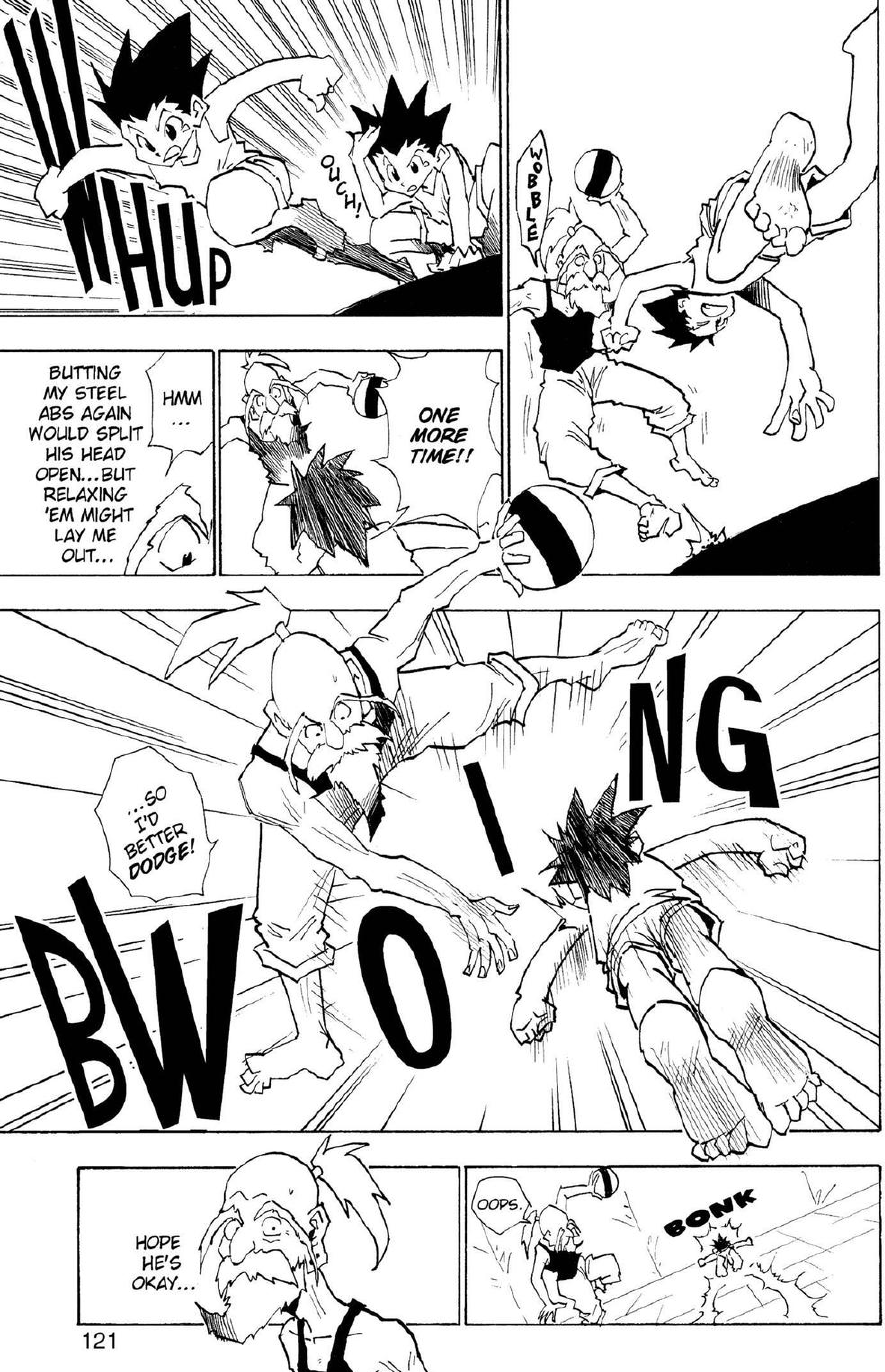

DIDN'T YOU HEAR A THING I SAID?!
IT'S POINTLESS! STUPID! MORONIC!!
SURE IT IS.
HUH?
BUT THERE'S STILL TIME...
...TO GET NETERO TO *USE* HIS RIGHT HAND.
O-KAAY ...
HAVE *FUN,* THEN.
I'M HITTIN' THE HAY.
SLAM
NETERO?
MM?
HOW'D HE DO THAT SLOW-MOVING...
...MANY-KILLUAS THING?
IT'S AN ADVANCED TECHNIQUE, USED MAINLY BY OUTLAWS.
NOT SOMETHING A NICE KID LIKE YOU SHOULD LEARN.

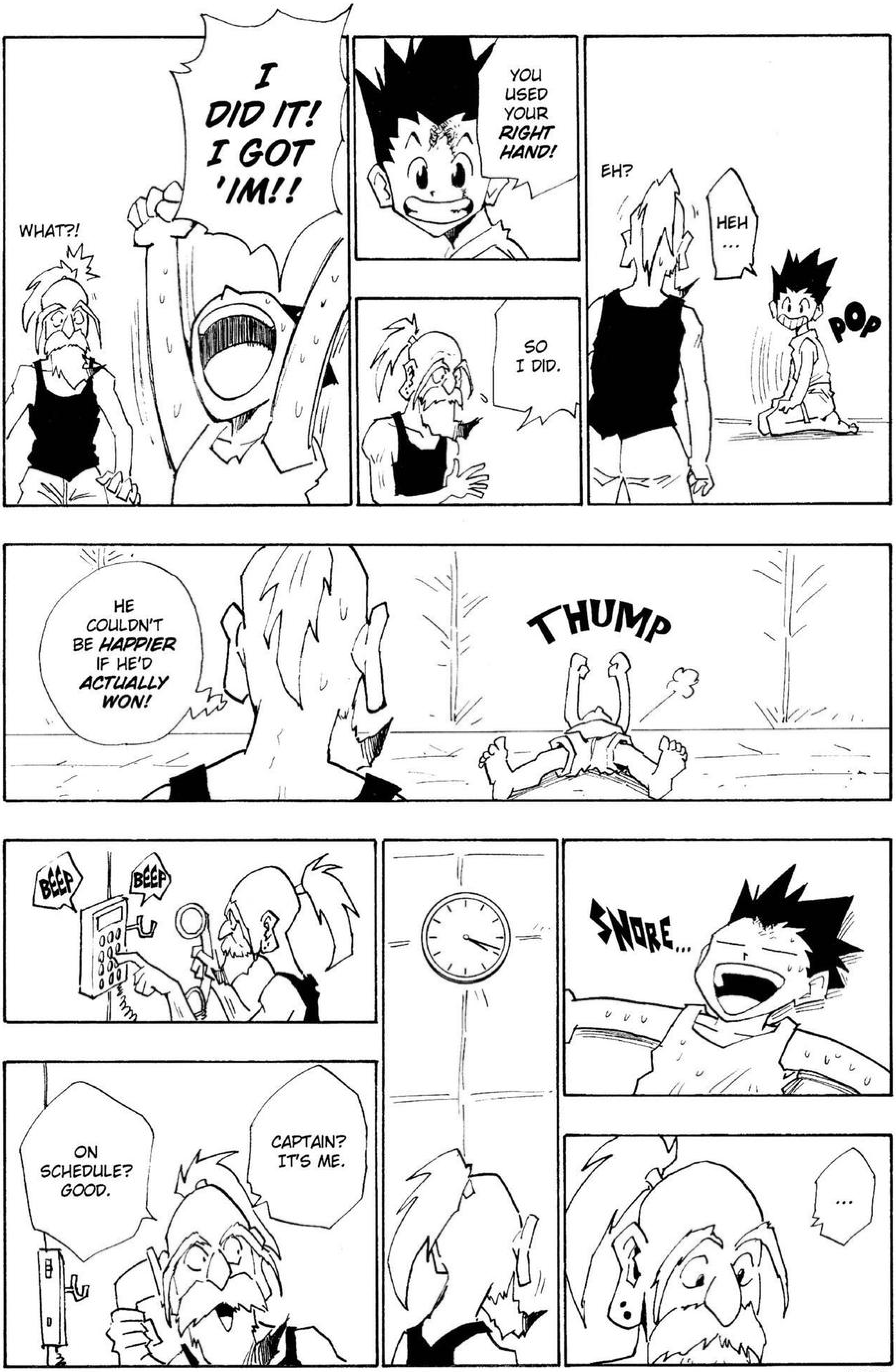

IM-PRESSIVE THOUGH, HUH?
YEAH, IT IS. AND HE'S CERTAINLY **MASTERED** IT.
KILLUA'S AN AMAZING GUY.
SWIEL!
NICE TRY.
WORTH A SHOT.
ALL THAT ABOUT MY RIGHT HAND...
...THAT WAS A NICE BIT OF **MISDIRECTION.**
DAMN THAT OLD MAN!
OH WELL...

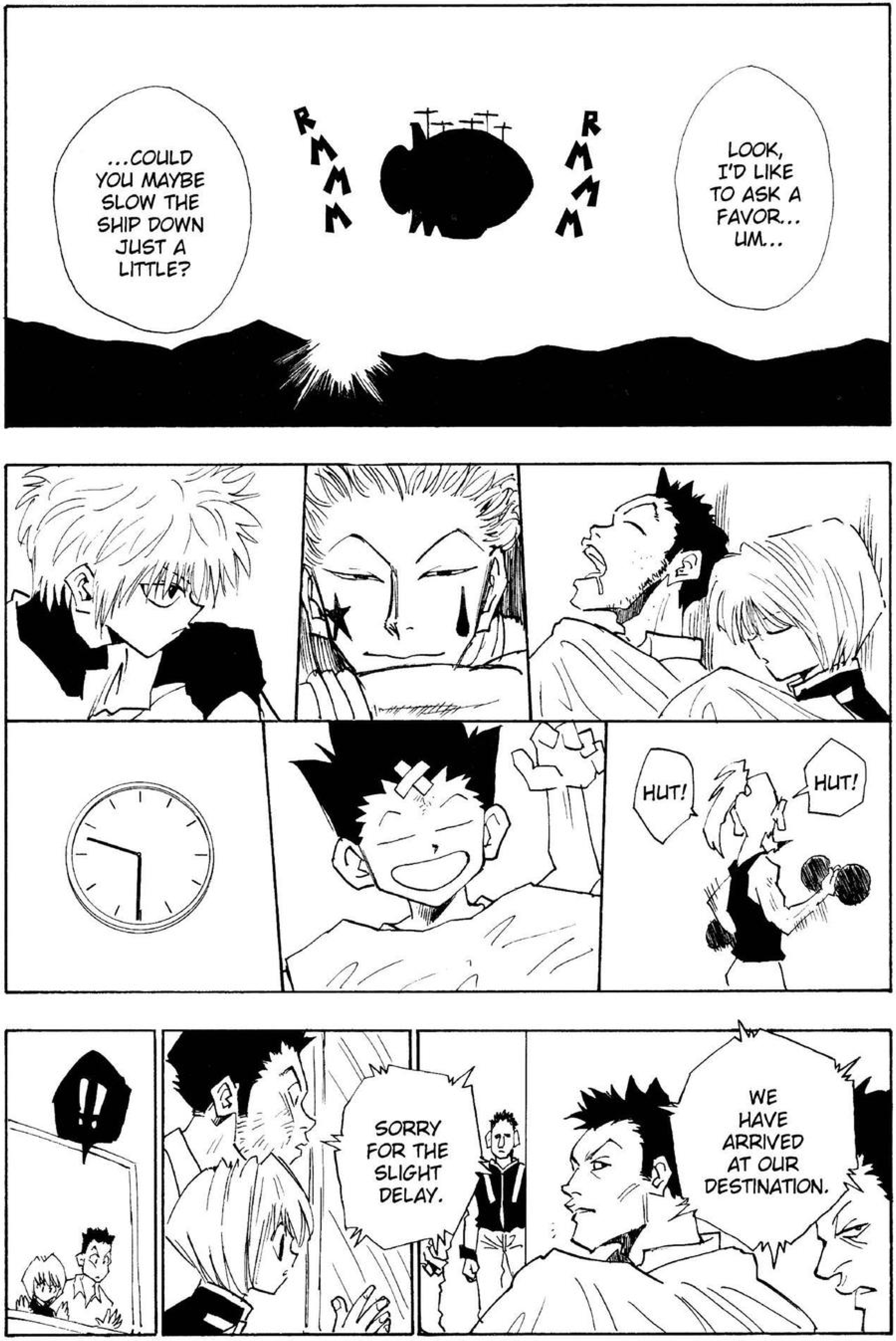

OOPS.
BUMP
390
391
ICK! HE'S ALL *SWEATY!*
HEY KID, WHERE'RE YOUR *MANNERS?*
390
HEY!!
IF I'D HAVE KEPT GOING, I WOULD'VE...
...WANTED THAT BALL ENOUGH TO KILL FOR IT.
390
391

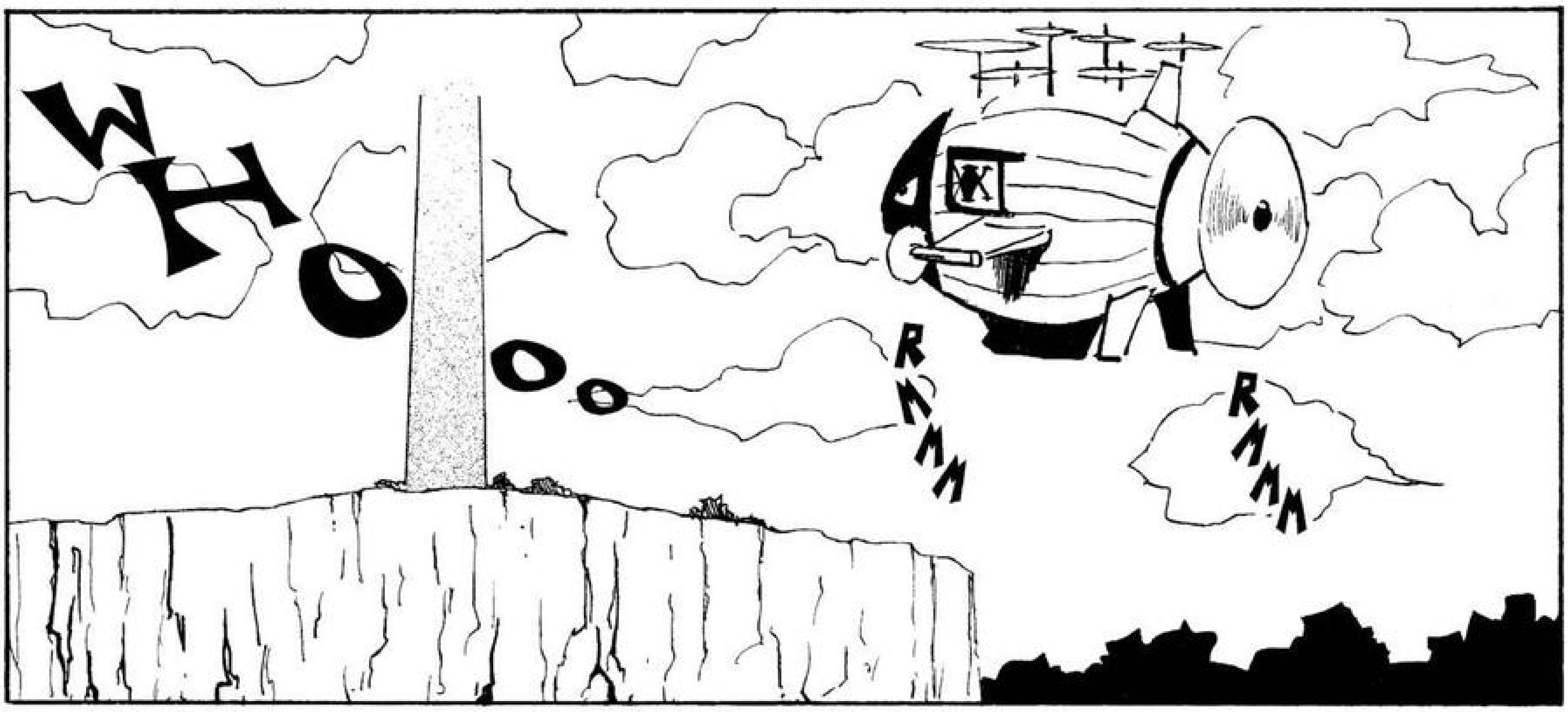

SHWISS
VIP
HUT!
VIP
HUT!
FFT
FFT
FFT
FWISH
HERE IT COMES!
TWITCH

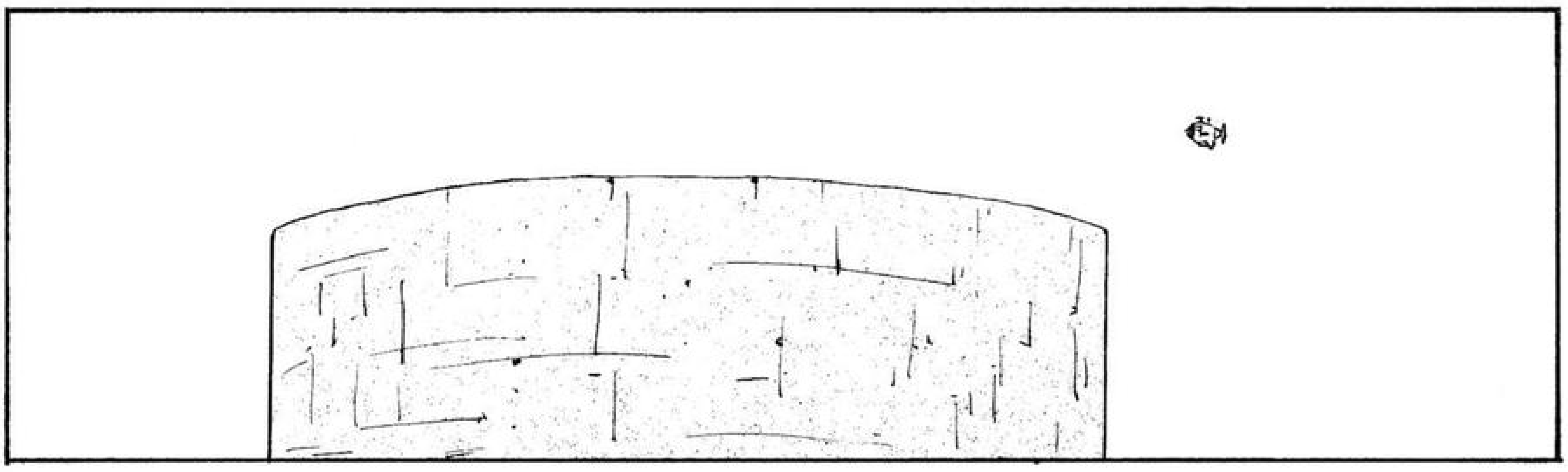

FWOO
!!
IT'S A *FEINT*-- TRYING FOR THE BALL, BUT GOING FOR...
BOOMP
...A HEAD-BUTT!!!
OW!!
CREEAK
CREEAK
HMM ...

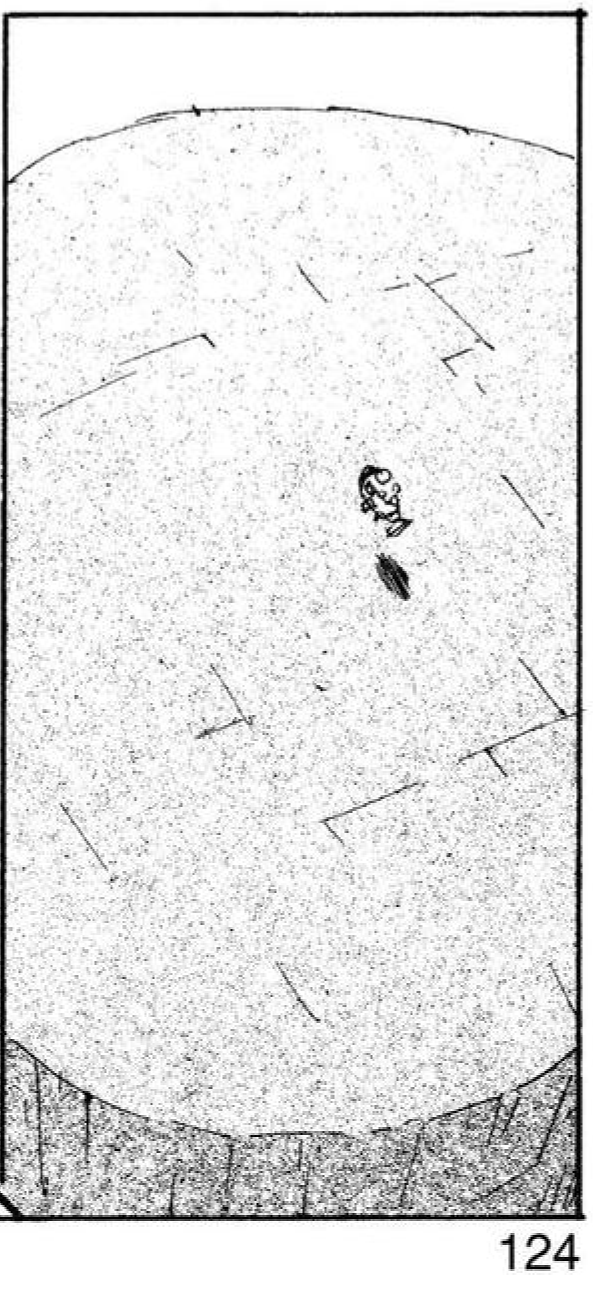

WOBBLE
WHUP
OUCH!
ONE MORE TIME!!
HMM ...
BUTTING MY STEEL ABS AGAIN WOULD SPLIT HIS HEAD OPEN...BUT RELAXING 'EM MIGHT LAY ME OUT...
BWOING
...SO I'D BETTER DODGE!
OOPS.
BONK
HOPE HE'S OKAY...

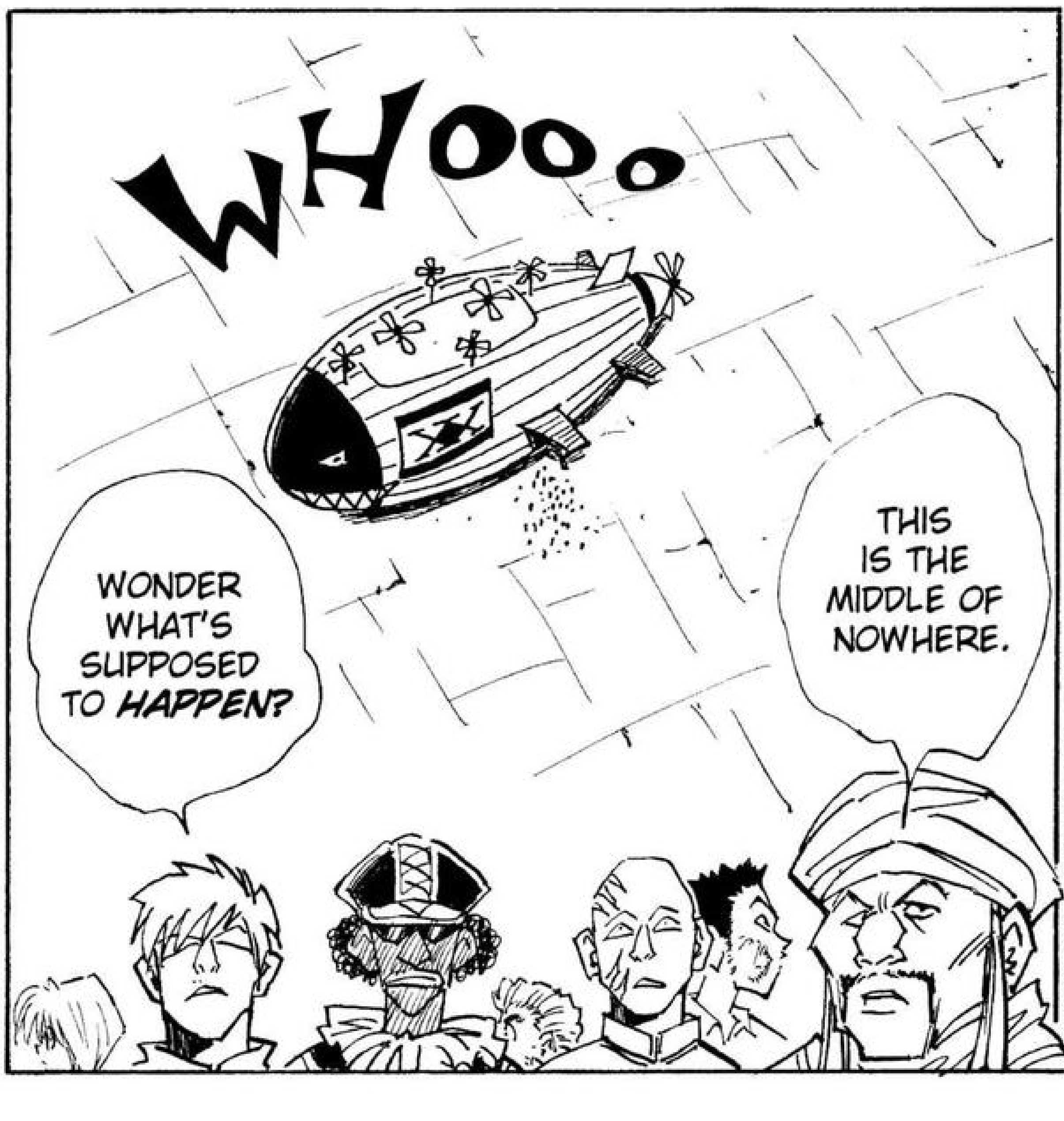

HEH ...
POP
EH?
YOU USED YOUR *RIGHT HAND!*
SO I DID.
I DID IT! I GOT 'IM!!
WHAT?!
THUMP
HE COULDN'T BE *HAPPIER* IF HE'D *ACTUALLY WON!*
SNORE...
...
BEEP
BEEP
CAPTAIN? IT'S ME.
ON SCHEDULE? GOOD.


LOOK, I'D LIKE TO ASK A FAVOR... UM...
RMMM
RMMM
...COULD YOU MAYBE SLOW THE SHIP DOWN JUST A LITTLE?
HUT!
HUT!
WE HAVE ARRIVED AT OUR DESTINATION.
SORRY FOR THE SLIGHT DELAY.
!!

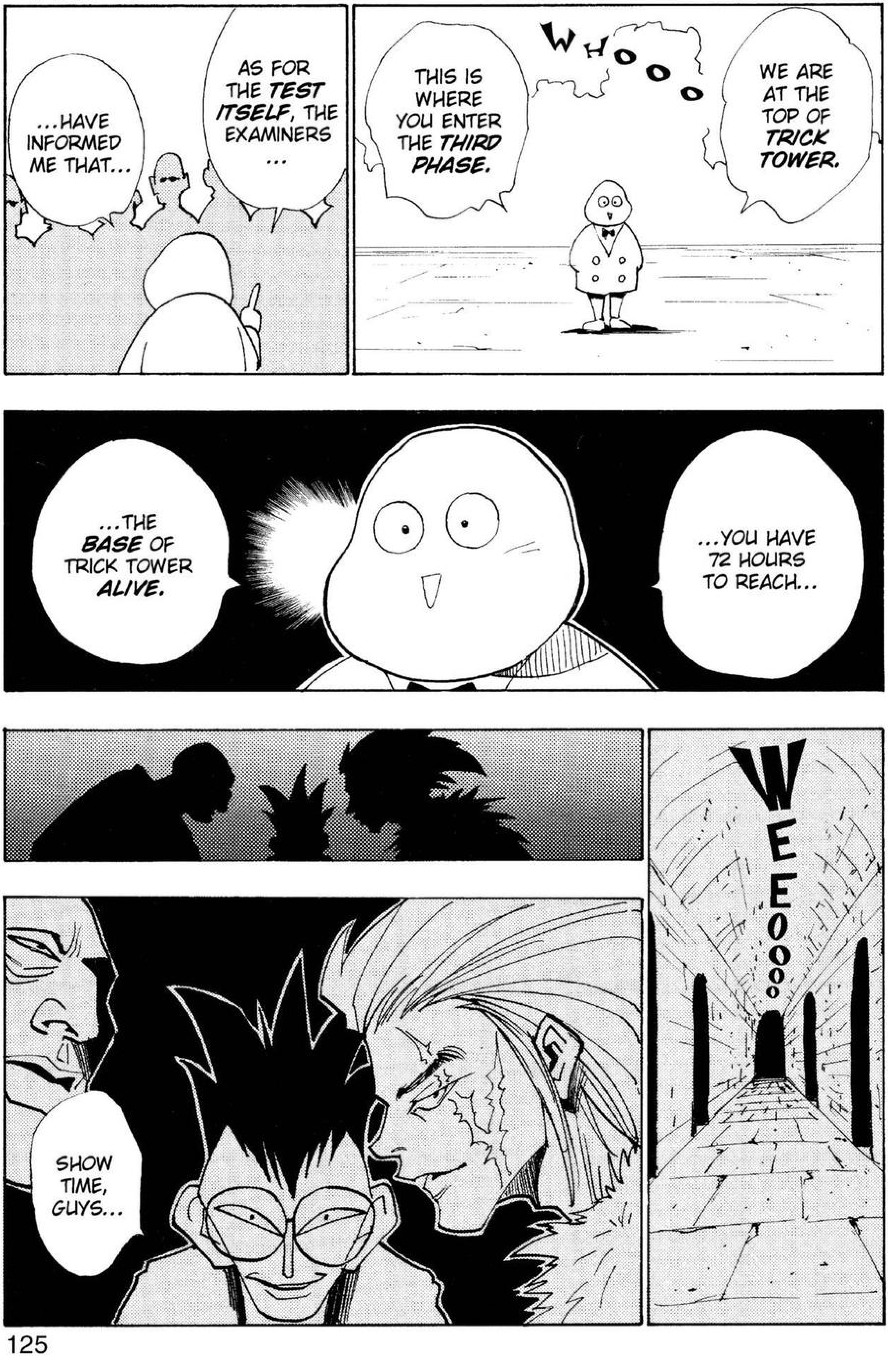

WHOOO
RMMM
RMMM

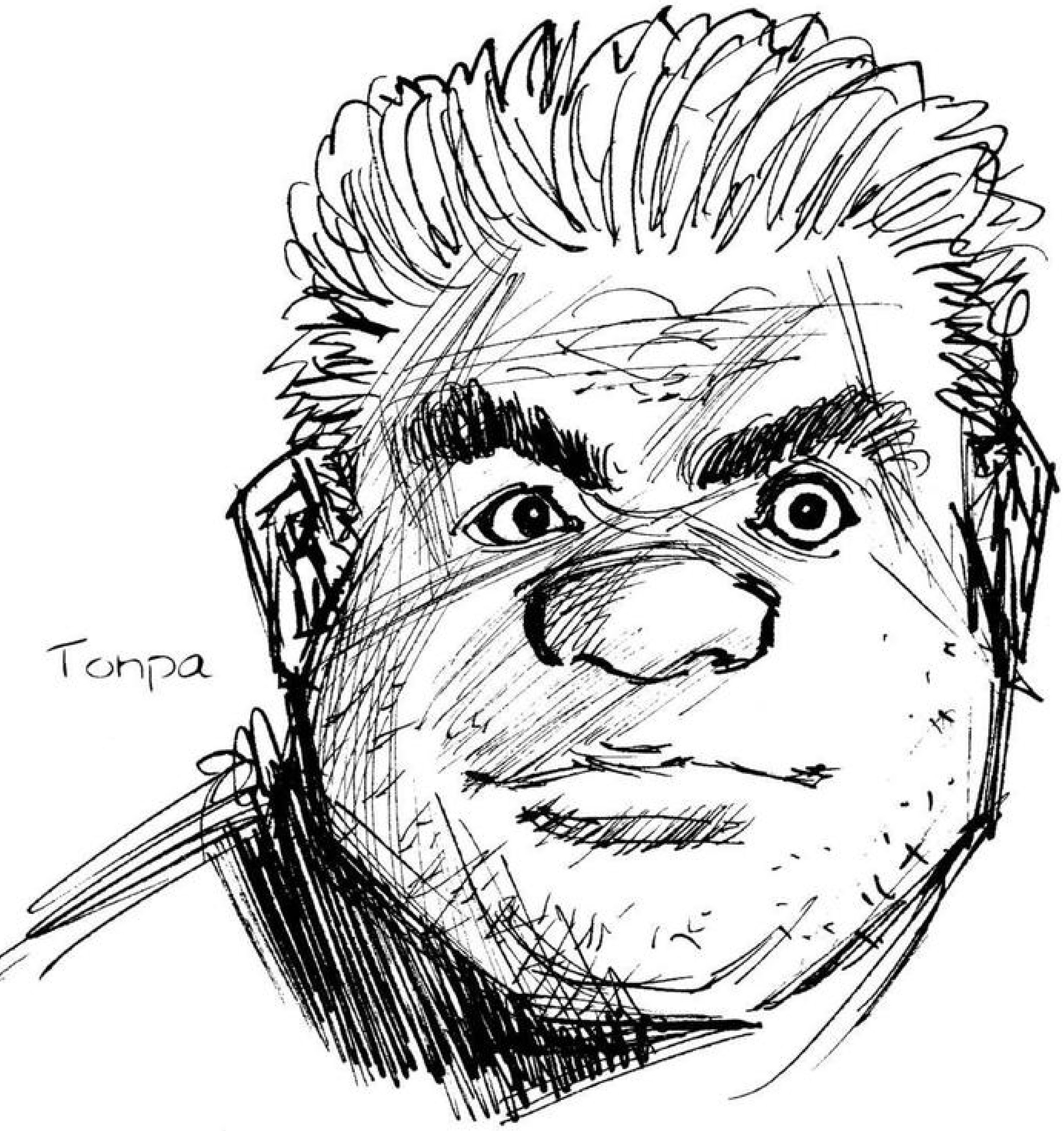





WHOOO
THIS IS THE MIDDLE OF NOWHERE.
WONDER WHAT'S SUPPOSED TO *HAPPEN?*

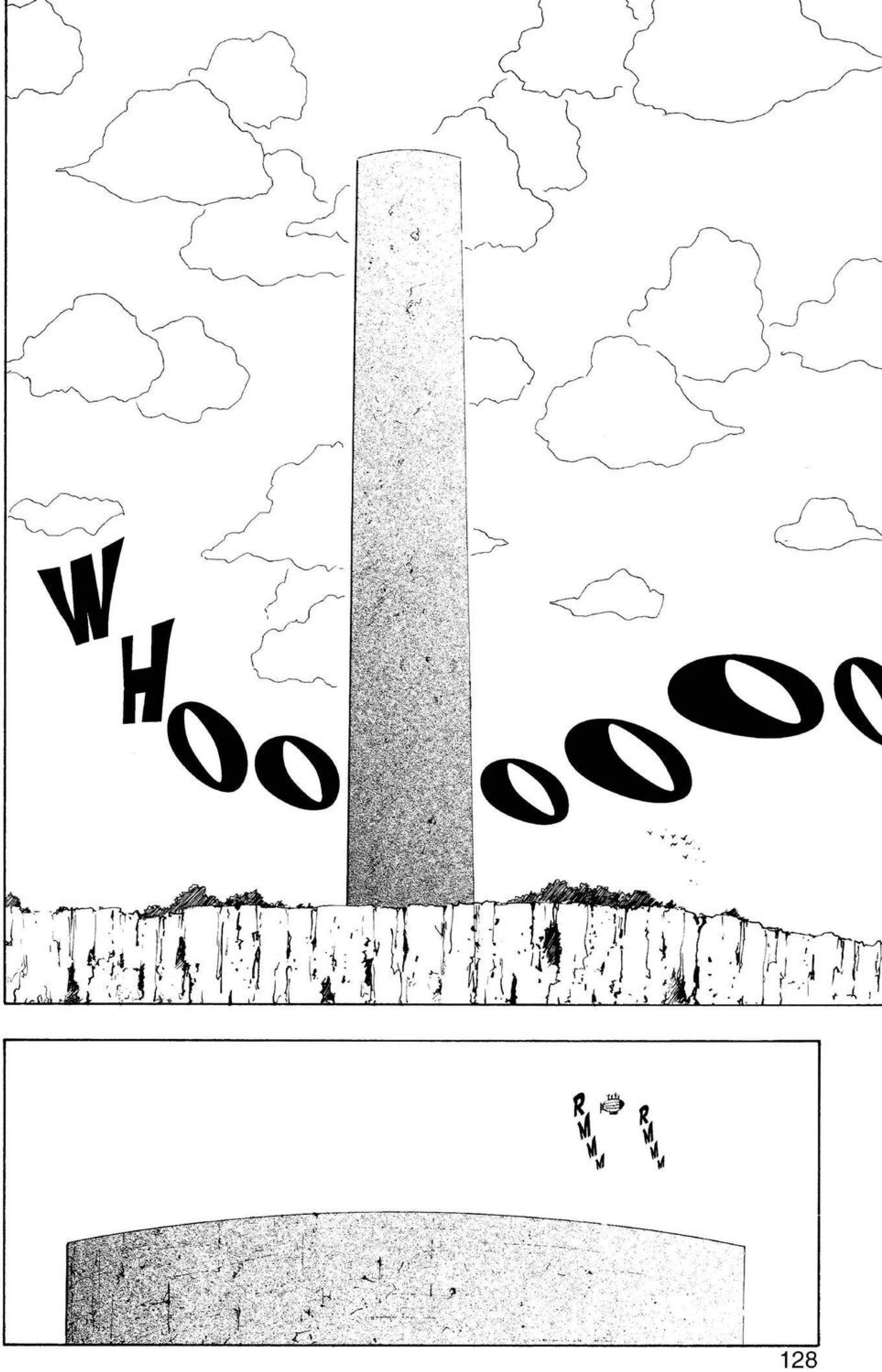
READ THIS WAY

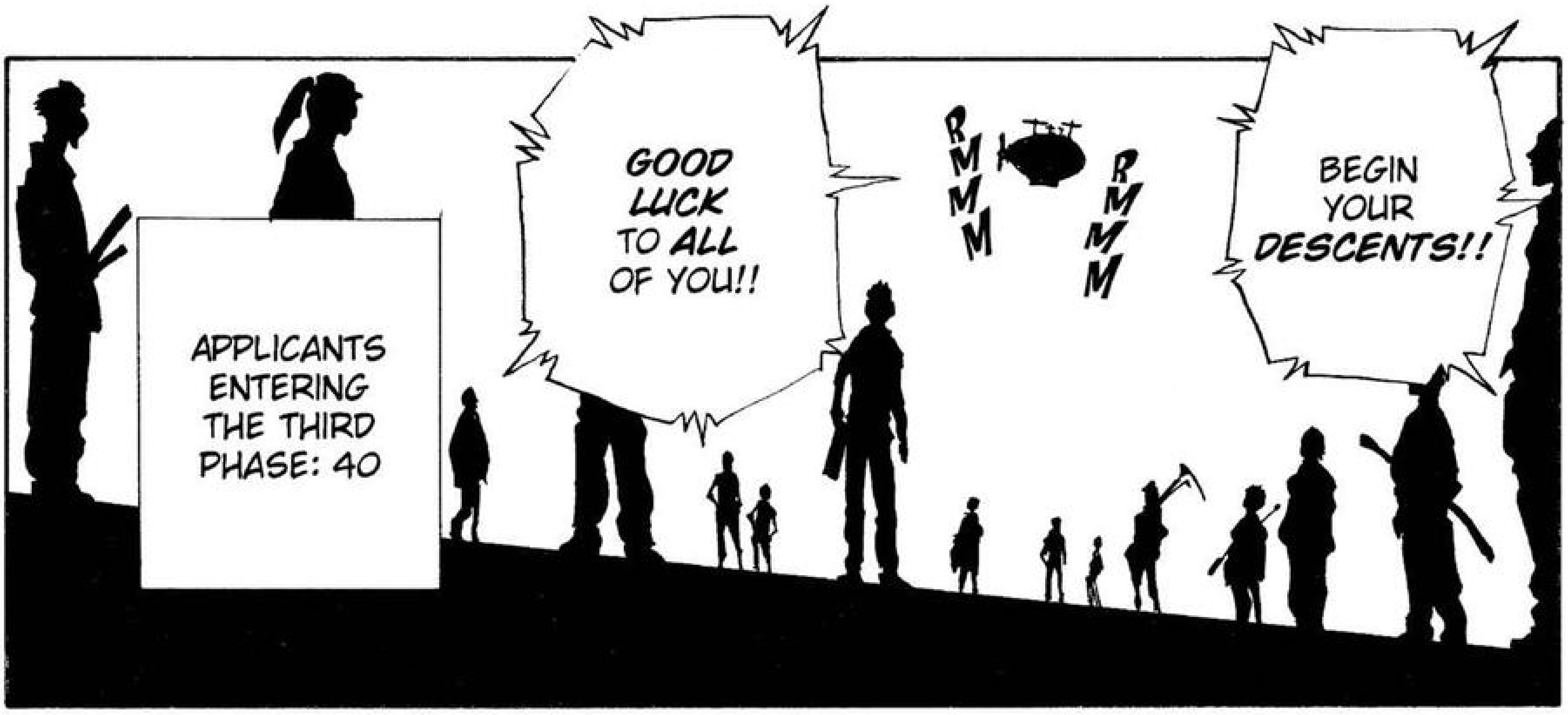

WE ARE AT THE TOP OF **TRICK TOWER.**
WHOOOO
THIS IS WHERE YOU ENTER THE **THIRD PHASE.**
AS FOR THE **TEST ITSELF**, THE EXAMINERS ...
...HAVE INFORMED ME THAT...
...YOU HAVE 72 HOURS TO REACH...
...THE **BASE** OF TRICK TOWER **ALIVE.**
WEEOOOO
SHOW TIME, GUYS...

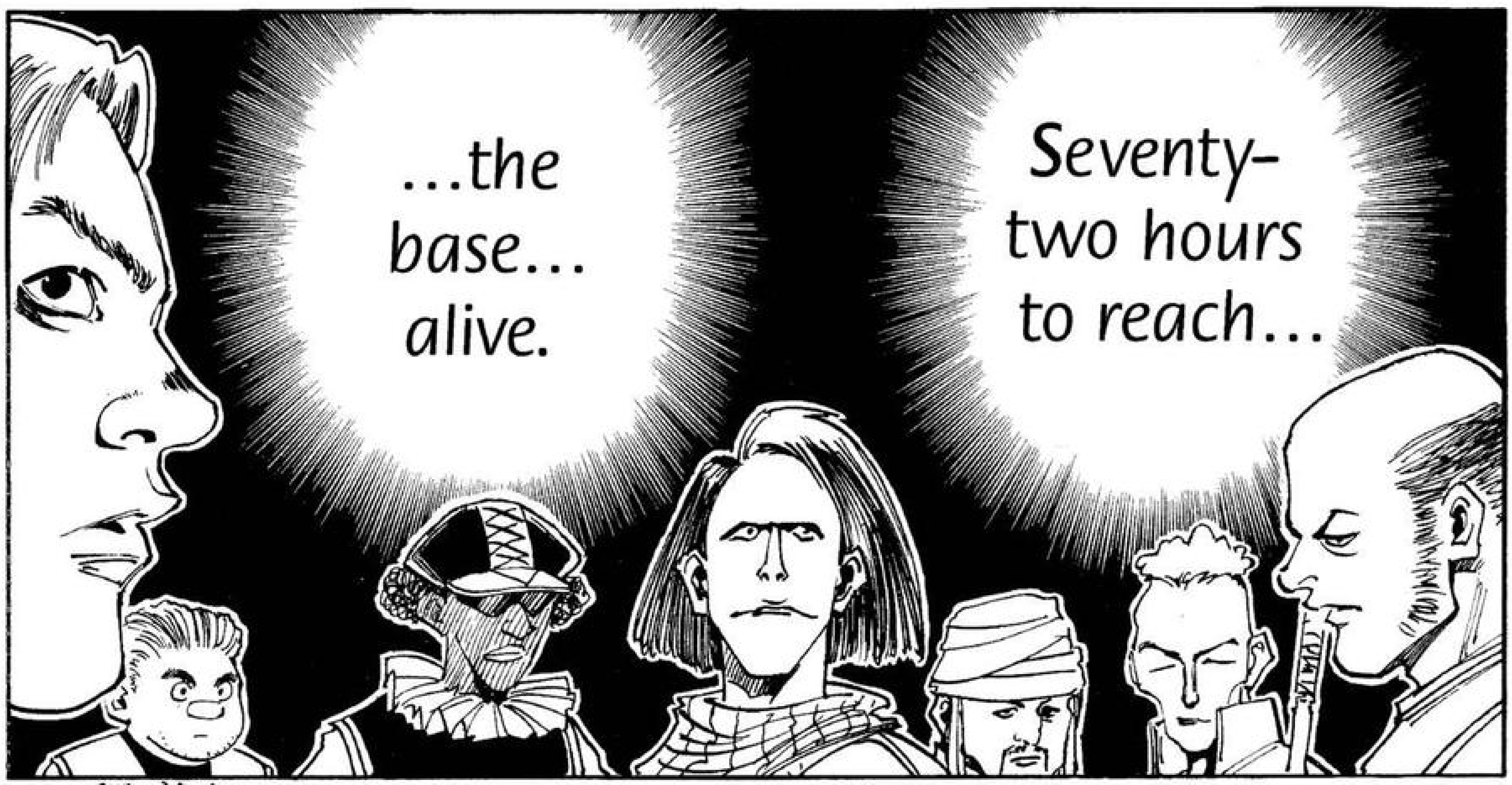

Tonpa

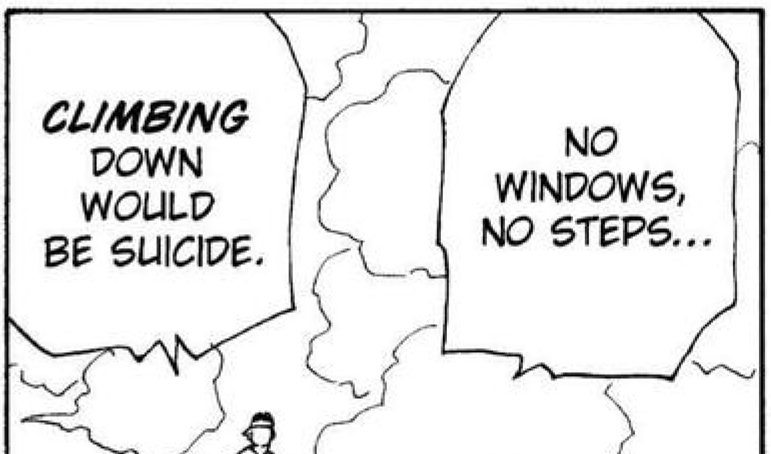
Chapter 15

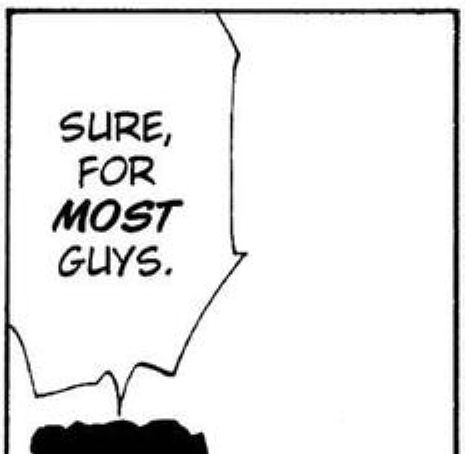
The Path of Majority Rules

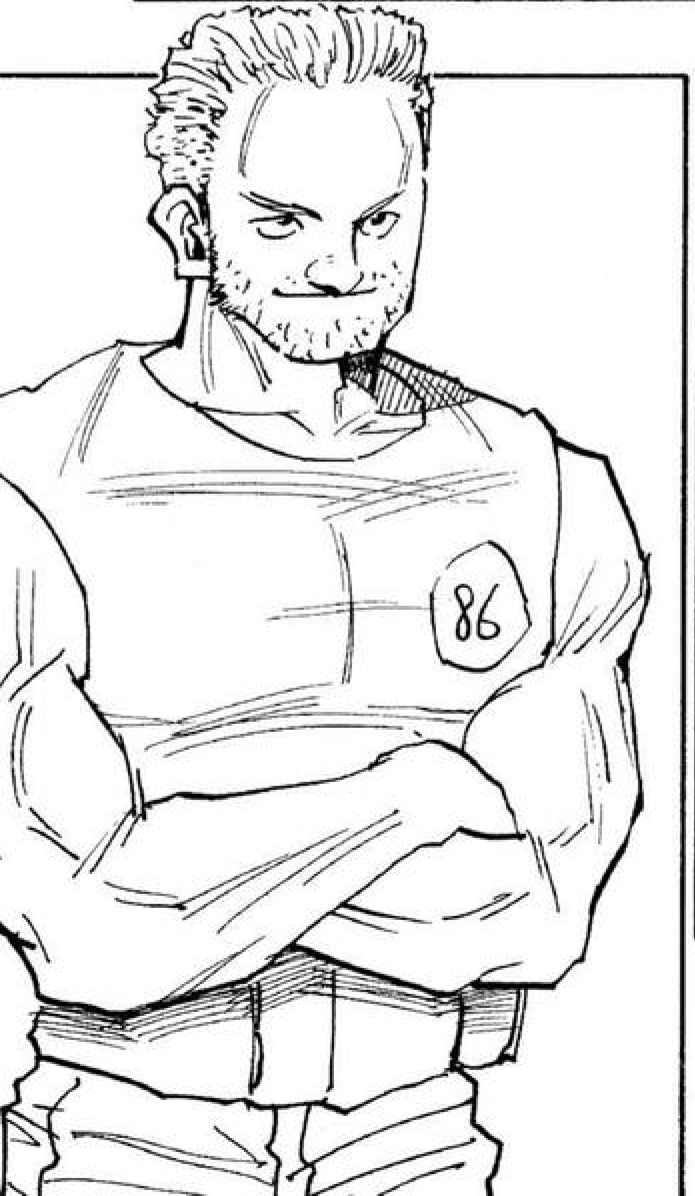

WHOOOOOOOOO
RMMM
RMMM

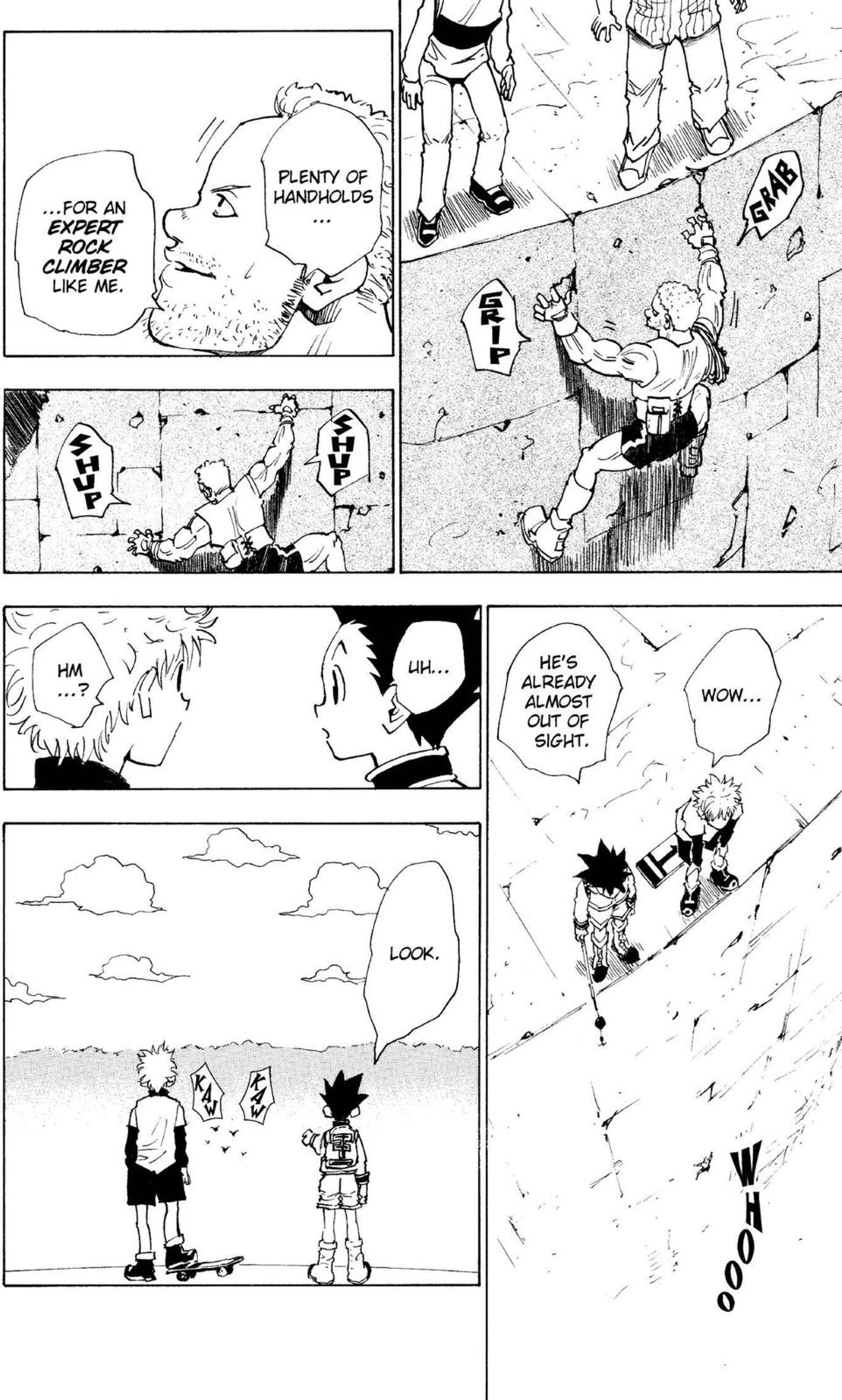

BEGIN YOUR *DESCENTS!!*
RMMM
RMMM
GOOD LUCK TO *ALL* OF YOU!!
APPLICANTS ENTERING THE THIRD PHASE: 40


Seventy-two hours to reach…
…the base… alive.

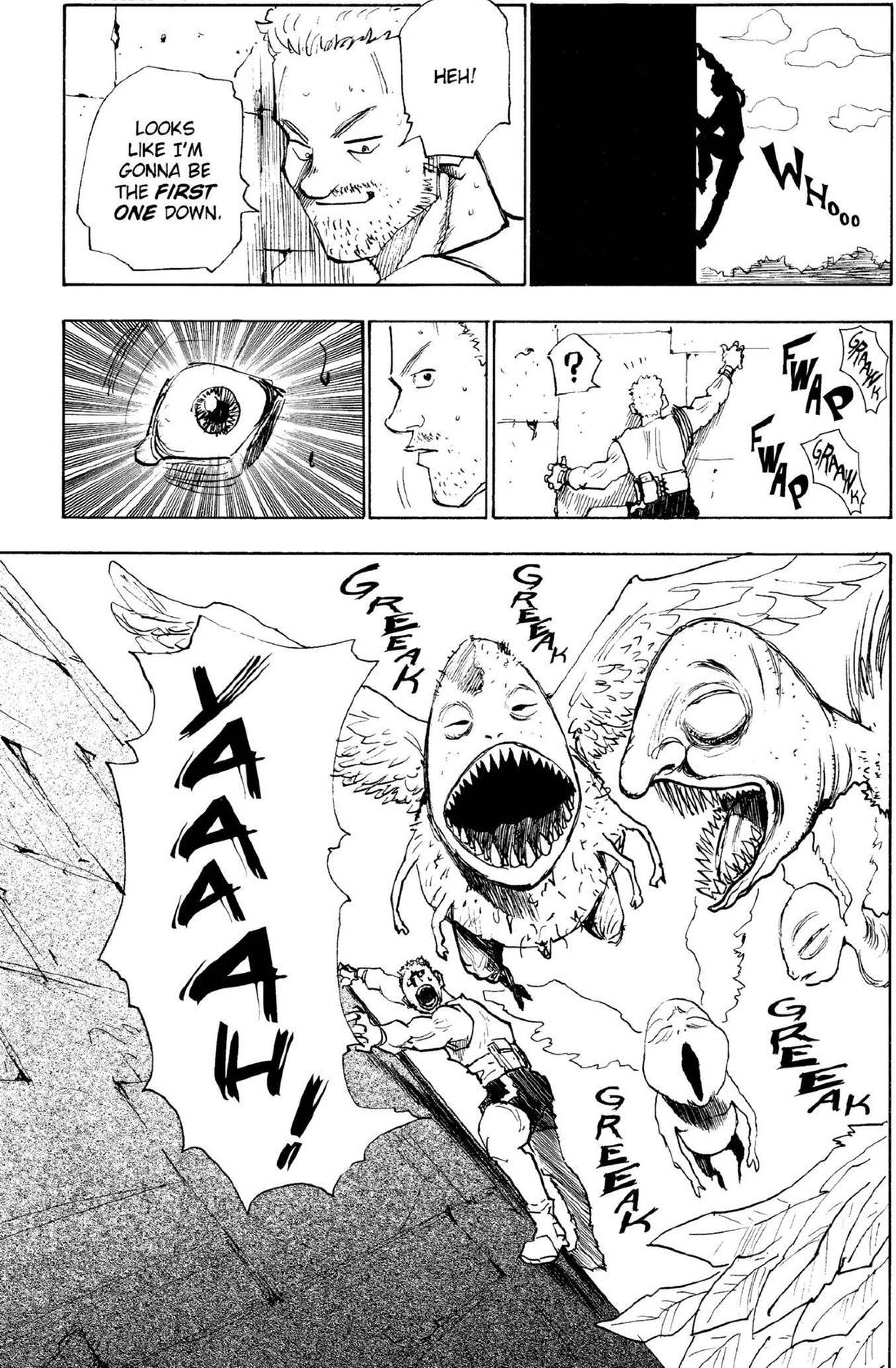

NO WINDOWS, NO STEPS…
CLIMBING DOWN WOULD BE SUICIDE.

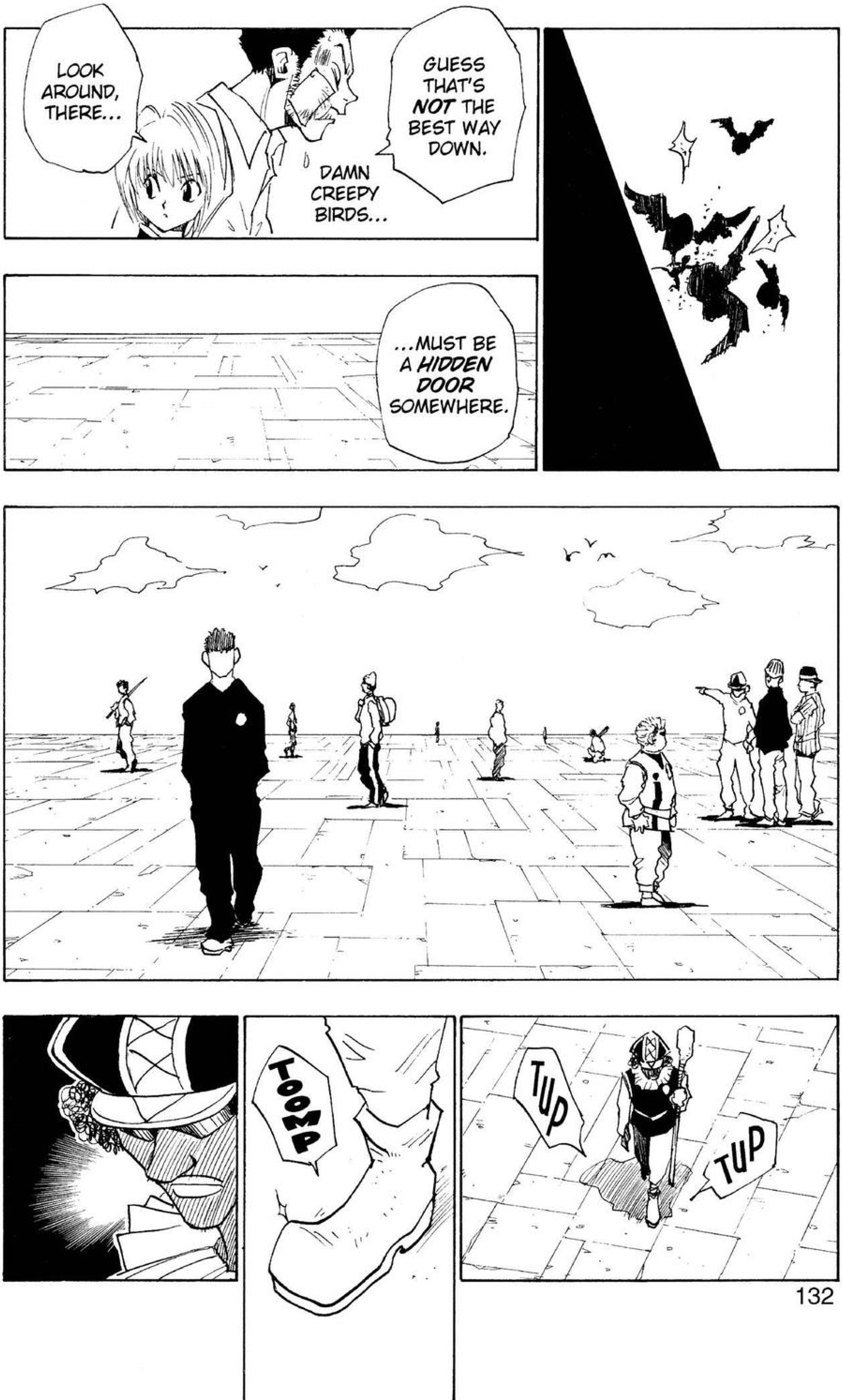

SURE, FOR *MOST* GUYS.

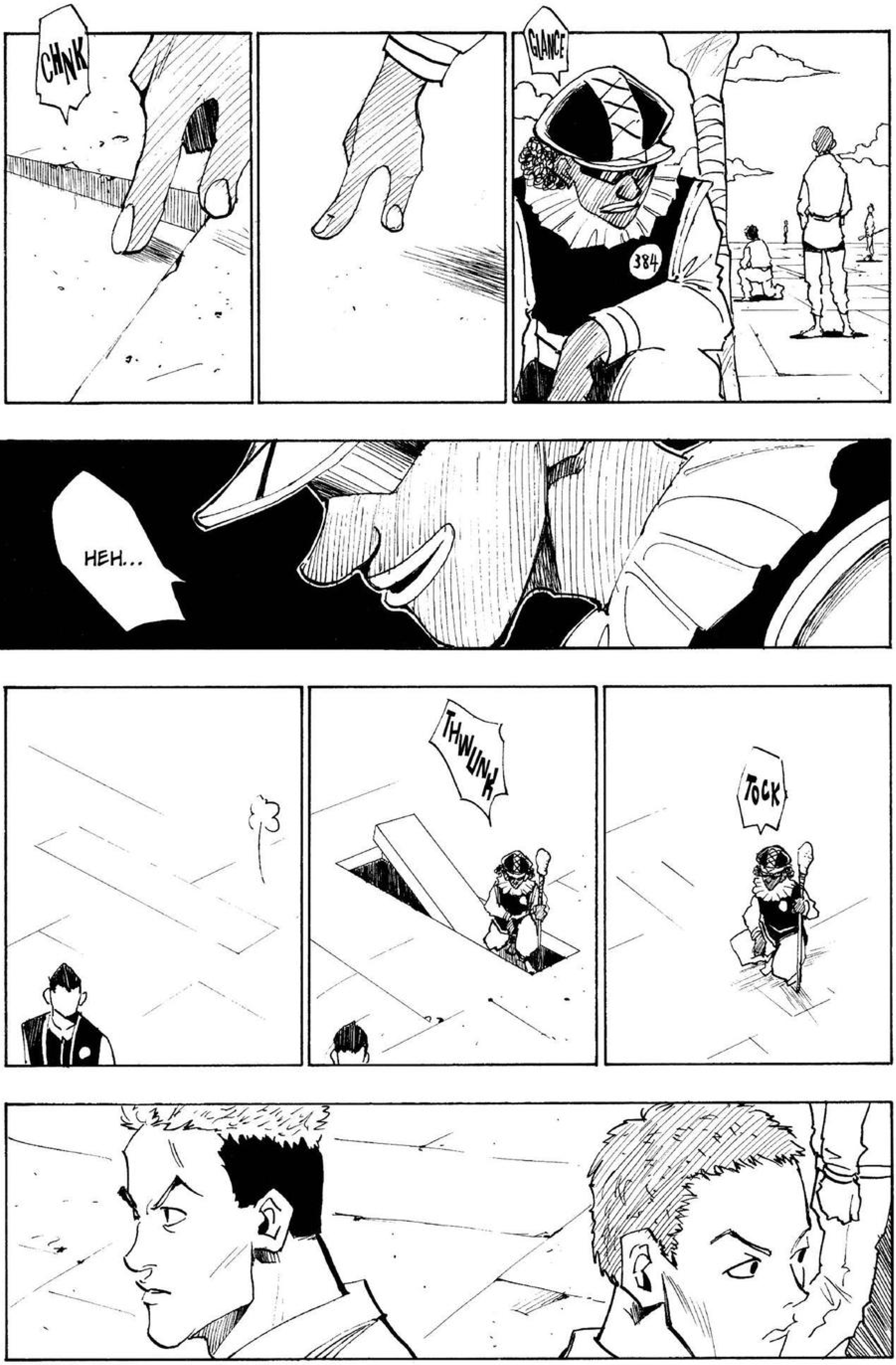

86

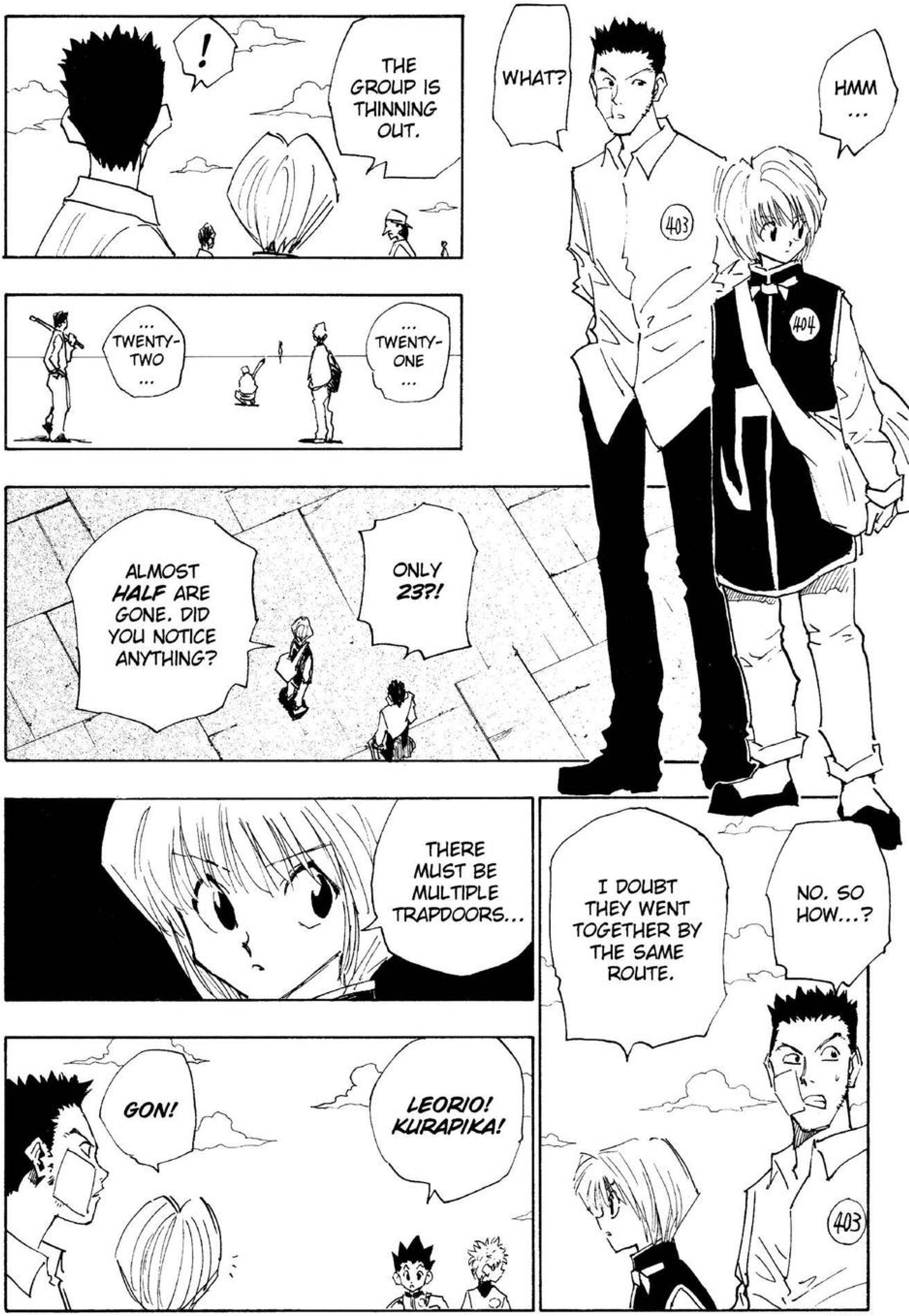

GRAB
GRIP
PLENTY OF HANDHOLDS ...
...FOR AN EXPERT ROCK CLIMBER LIKE ME.
SHUP
SHUP
WOW...
HE'S ALREADY ALMOST OUT OF SIGHT.
WHOOOO
UH...
HM ...?
LOOK.
KAW
KAW

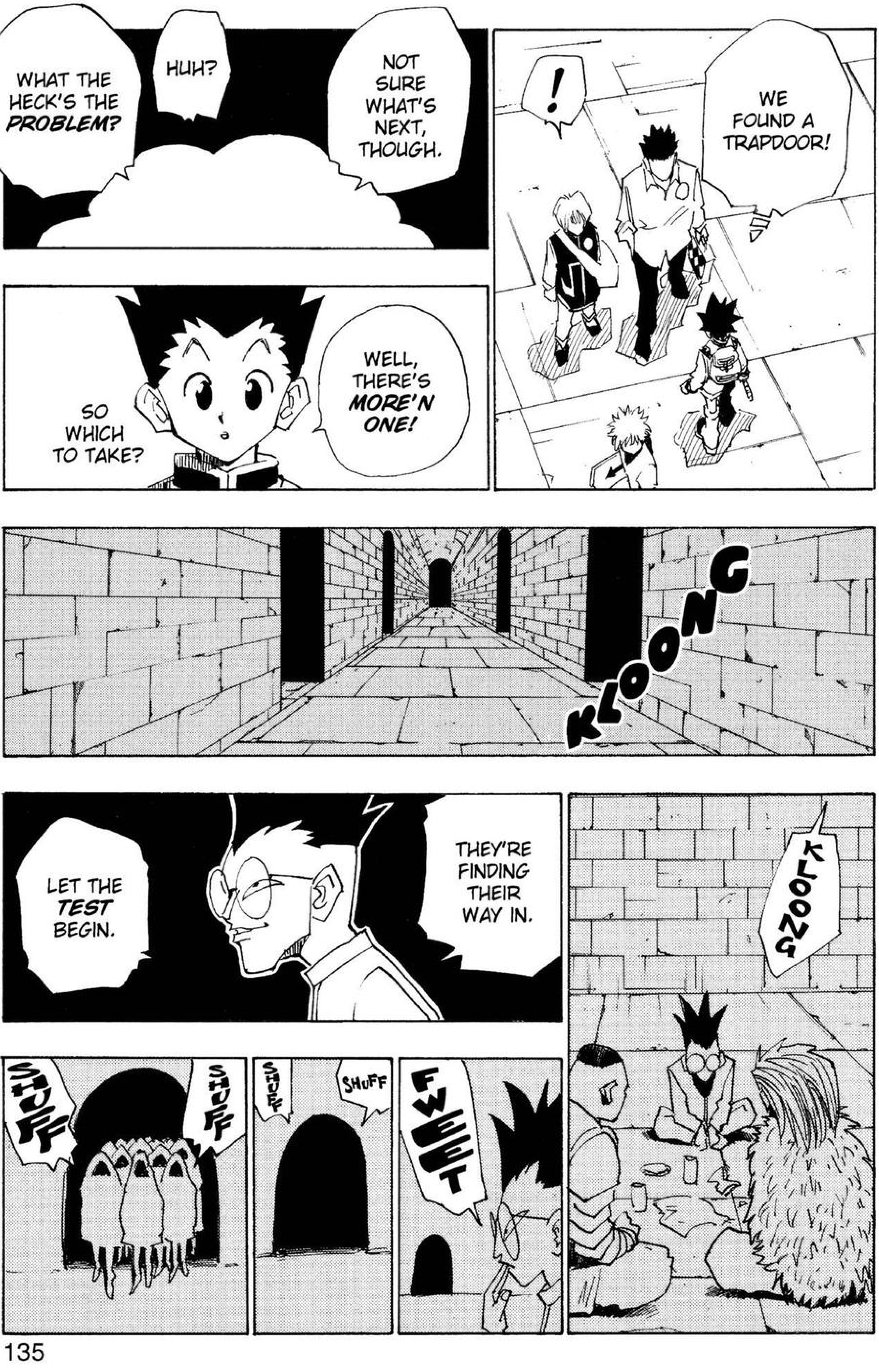
READ THIS WAY

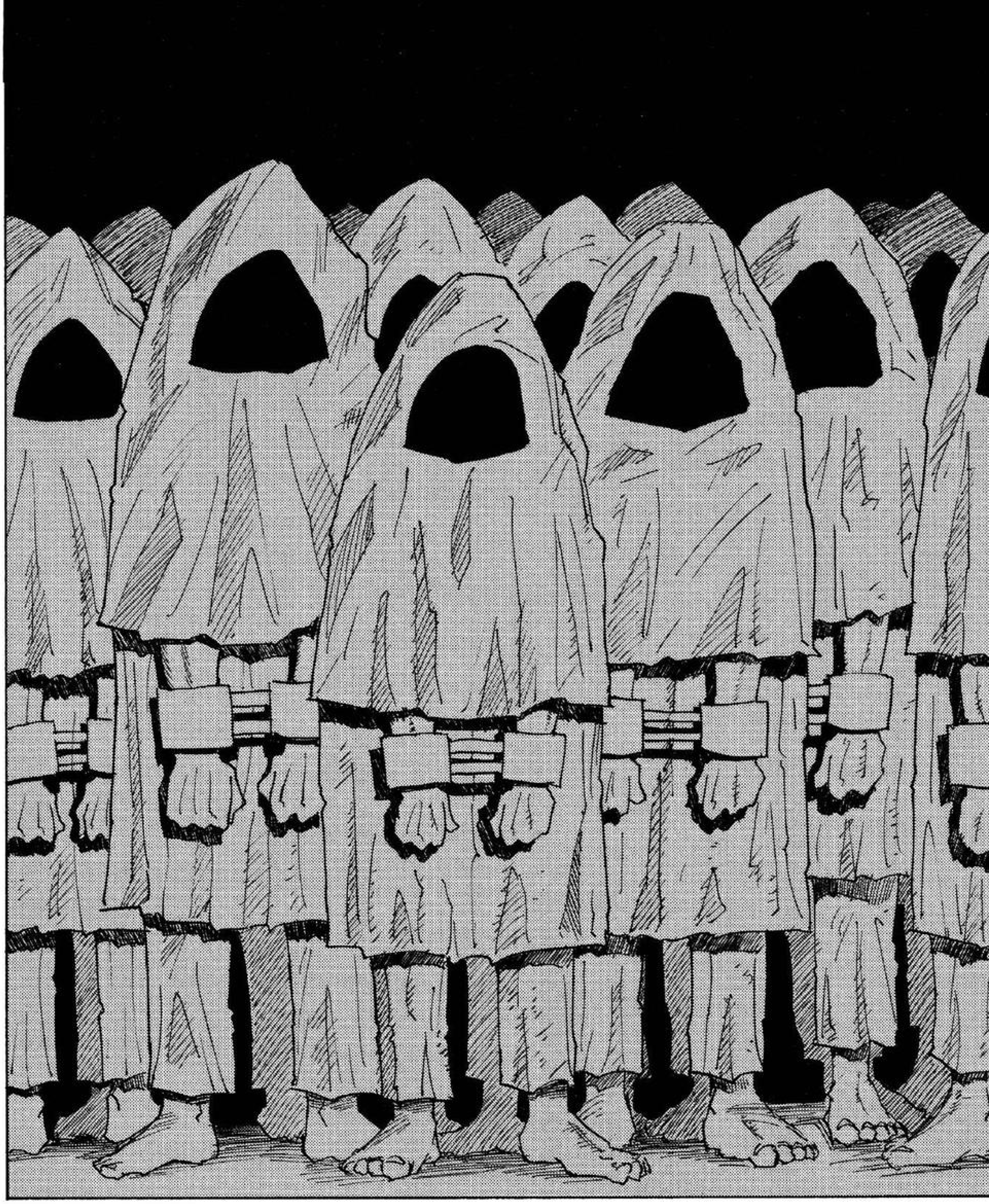

WHOOO
HEH!
LOOKS LIKE I'M GONNA BE THE *FIRST ONE* DOWN.
?
GRAAWK
FWAP
GRAAWK
FWAP
GREEAK
GREEAK
YAAAH!!
GREEAK
GREEAK

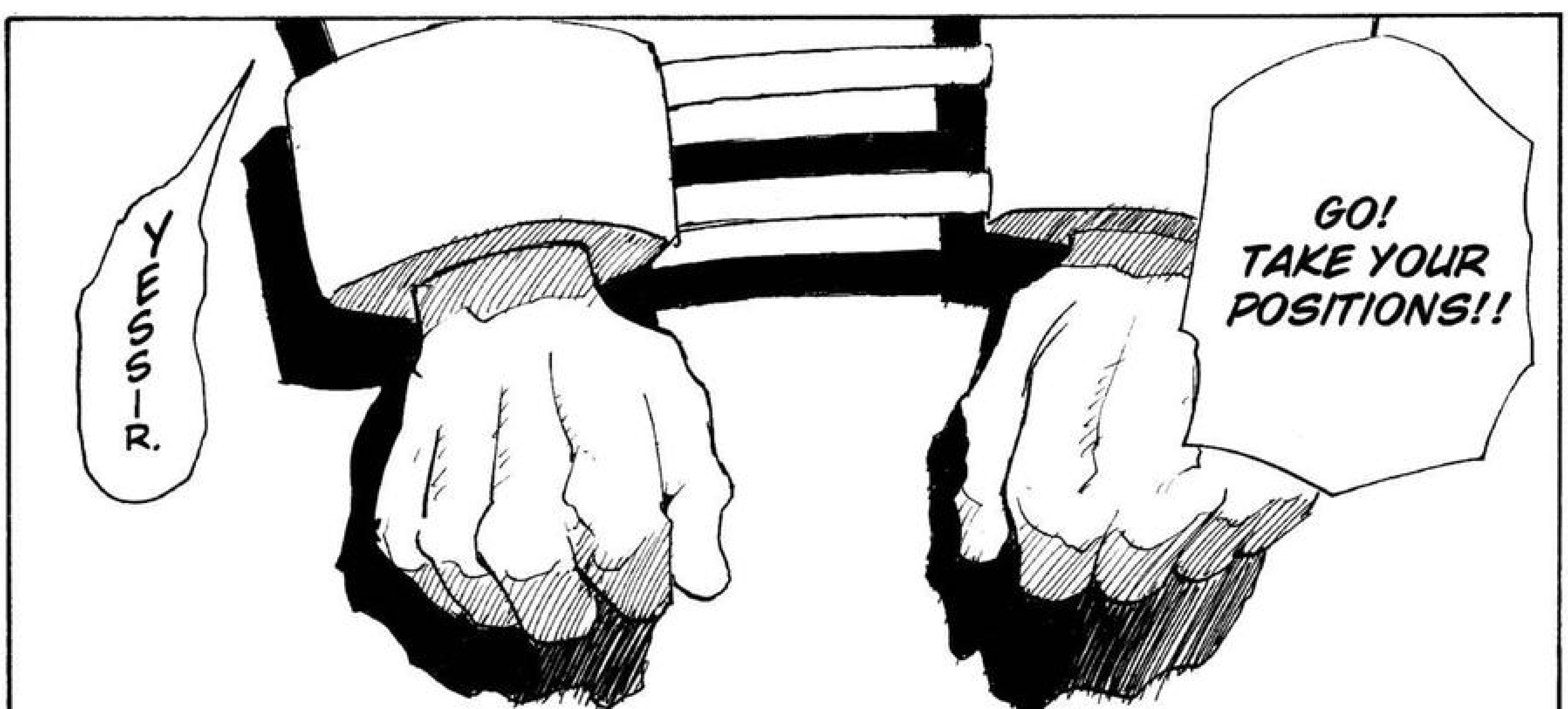

GUESS THAT'S ***NOT*** THE BEST WAY DOWN.
DAMN CREEPY BIRDS...
LOOK AROUND, THERE...
...MUST BE A ***HIDDEN DOOR*** SOMEWHERE.
TOOMP
TUP
TUP

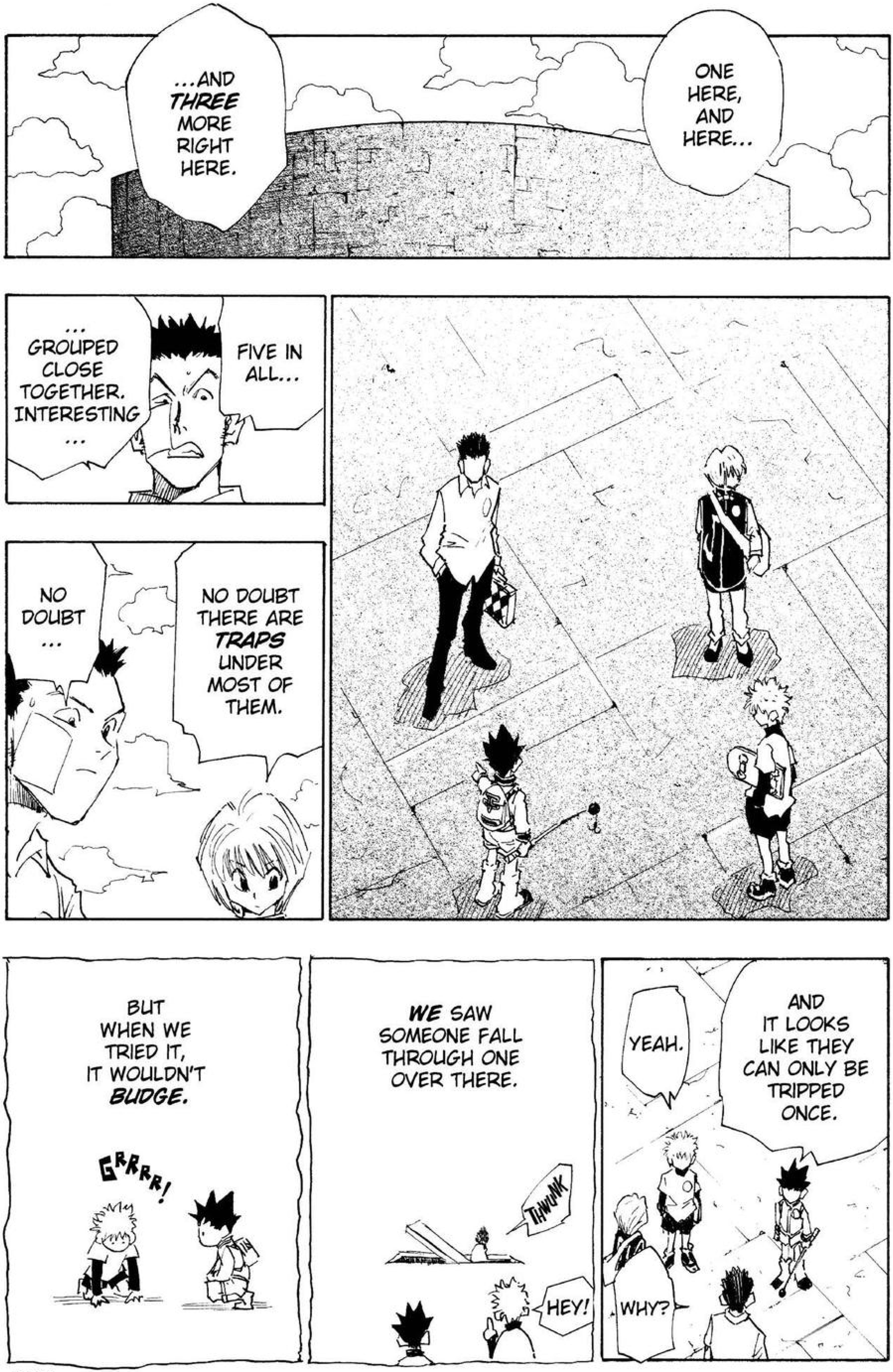

CHNK
GLANCE
384
HEH...
THWUNK
TOCK

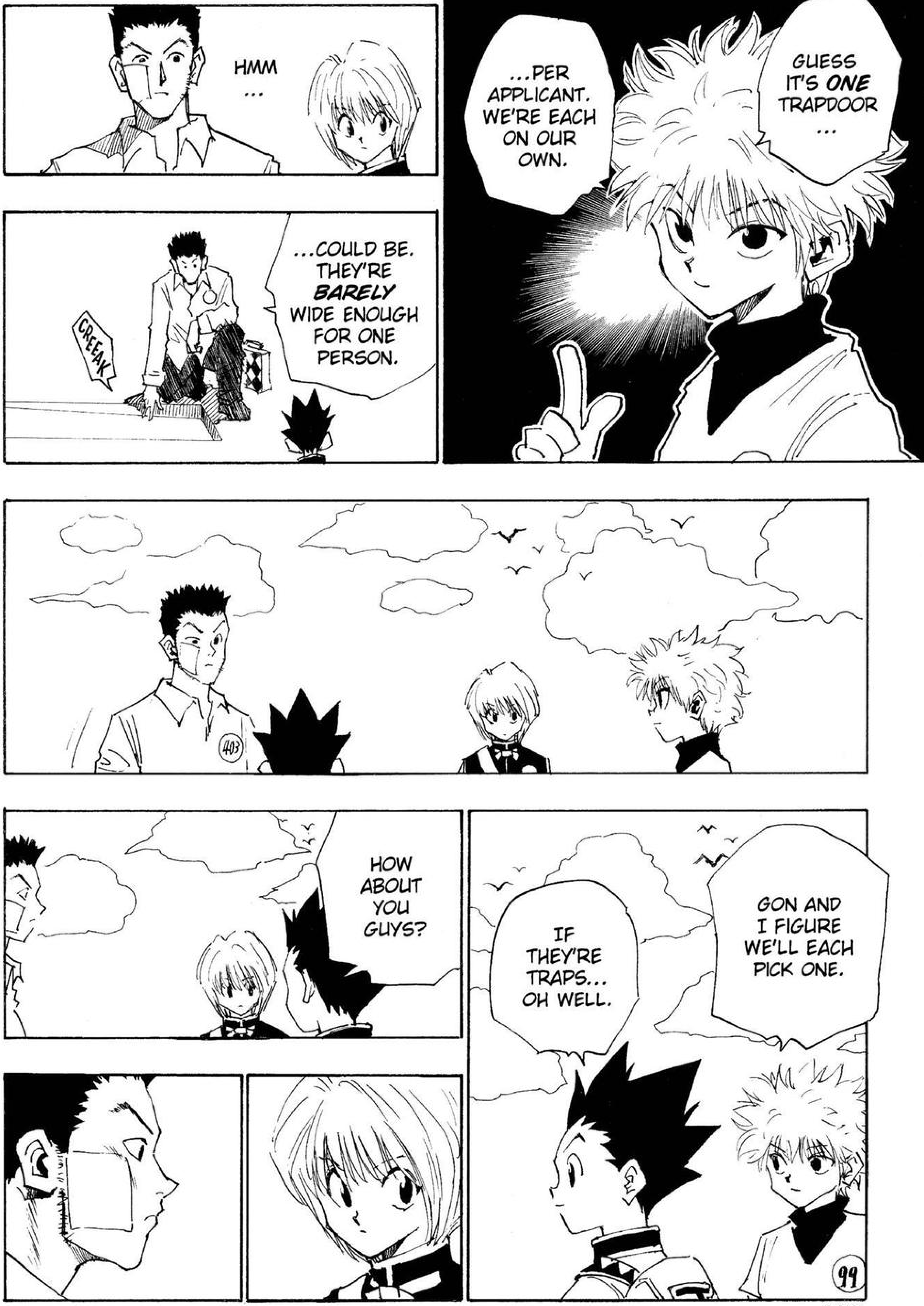

HMM ...
WHAT?
THE GROUP IS THINNING OUT.
!
... TWENTY-ONE ...
... TWENTY-TWO ...
ONLY *23?!*
ALMOST *HALF* ARE GONE. DID YOU NOTICE ANYTHING?
NO. SO HOW...?
I DOUBT THEY WENT TOGETHER BY THE SAME ROUTE.
THERE MUST BE MULTIPLE TRAPDOORS...
LEORIO! KURAPIKA!
GON!

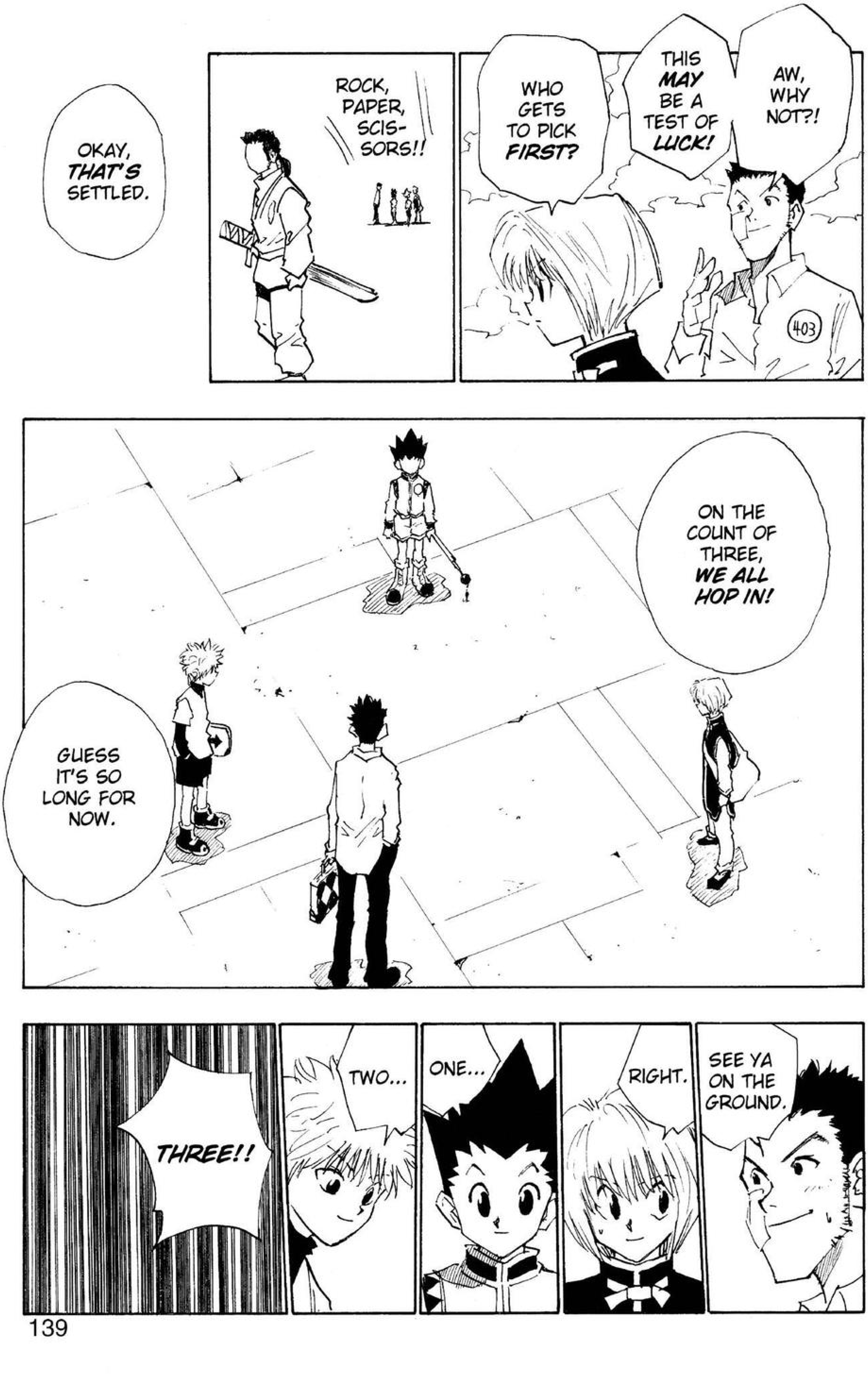

!
WE FOUND A TRAPDOOR!
NOT SURE WHAT'S NEXT, THOUGH.
HUH?
WHAT THE HECK'S THE *PROBLEM?*
WELL, THERE'S *MORE'N ONE!*
SO WHICH TO TAKE?
KLOONG
KLOONG
THEY'RE FINDING THEIR WAY IN.
LET THE *TEST* BEGIN.
FWEET
SHUFF
SHUFF
SHUFF
SHUFF

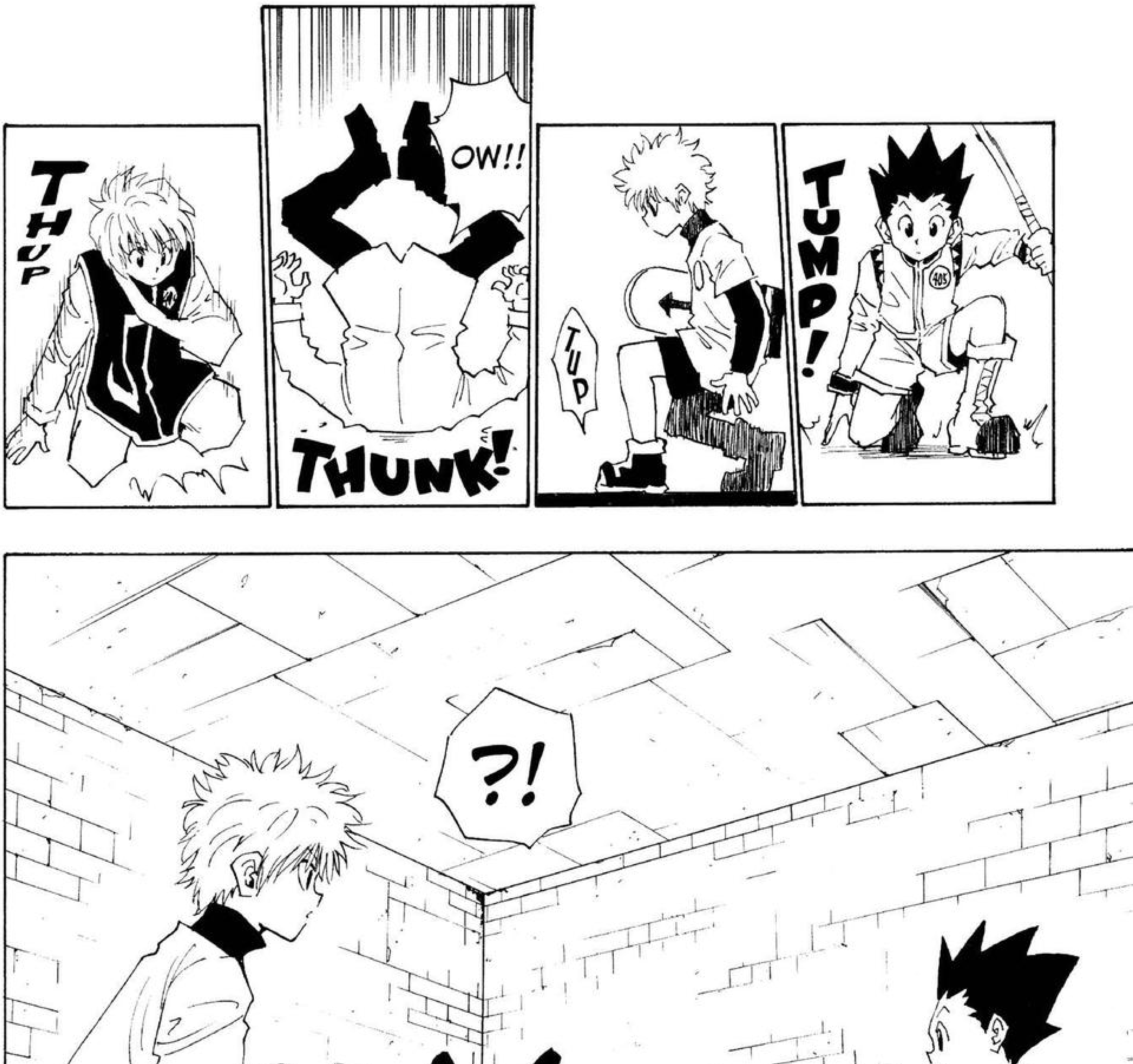



GO! TAKE YOUR POSITIONS!!
YESSIR.

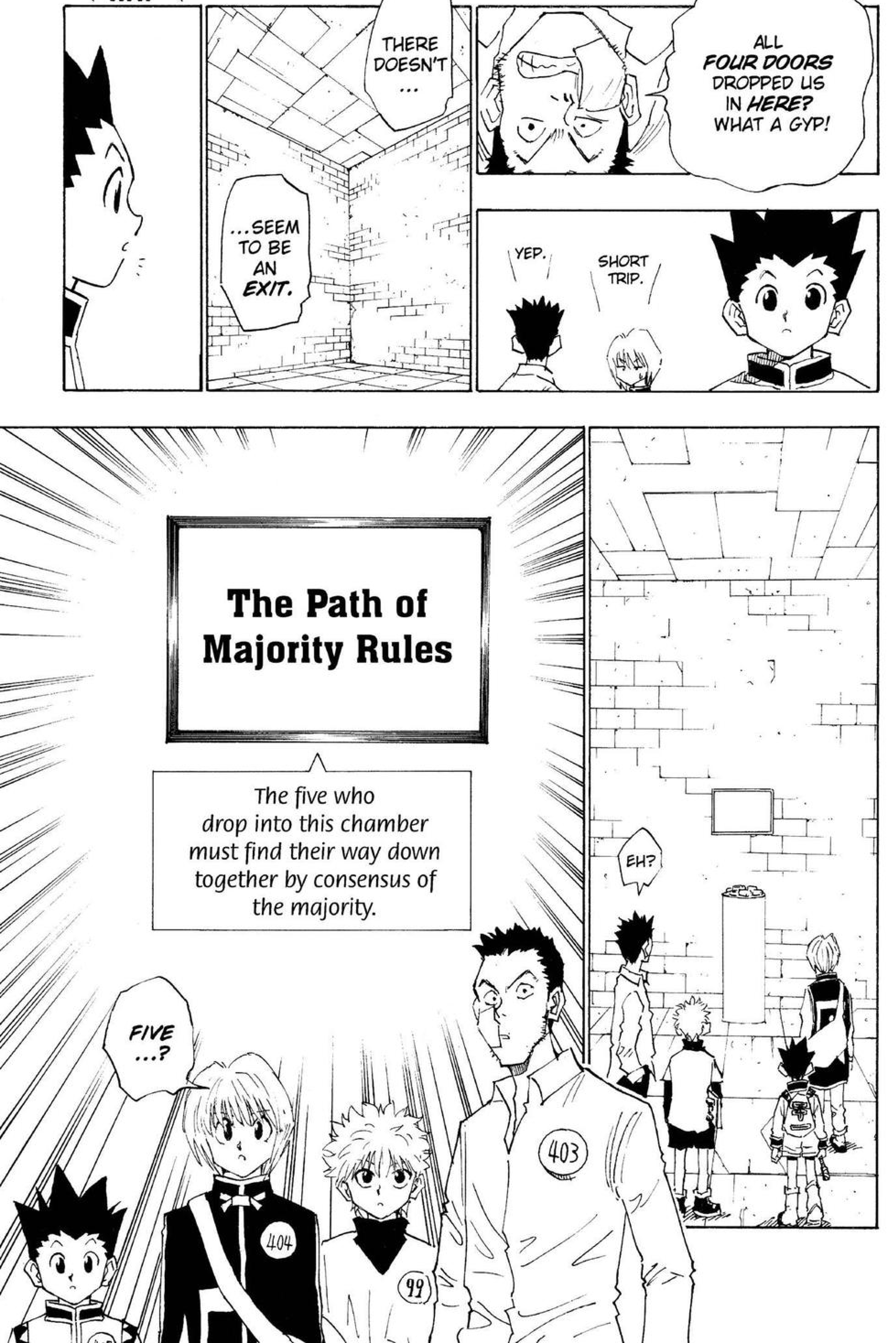

ONE HERE, AND HERE...
...AND *THREE* MORE RIGHT HERE.
FIVE IN ALL...
...GROUPED CLOSE TOGETHER. INTERESTING...
NO DOUBT THERE ARE *TRAPS* UNDER MOST OF THEM.
NO DOUBT...
BUT WHEN WE TRIED IT, IT WOULDN'T *BUDGE.*
GRRRR!
WE SAW SOMEONE FALL THROUGH ONE OVER THERE.
THWUNK
HEY!
YEAH.
AND IT LOOKS LIKE THEY CAN ONLY BE TRIPPED ONCE.
WHY?

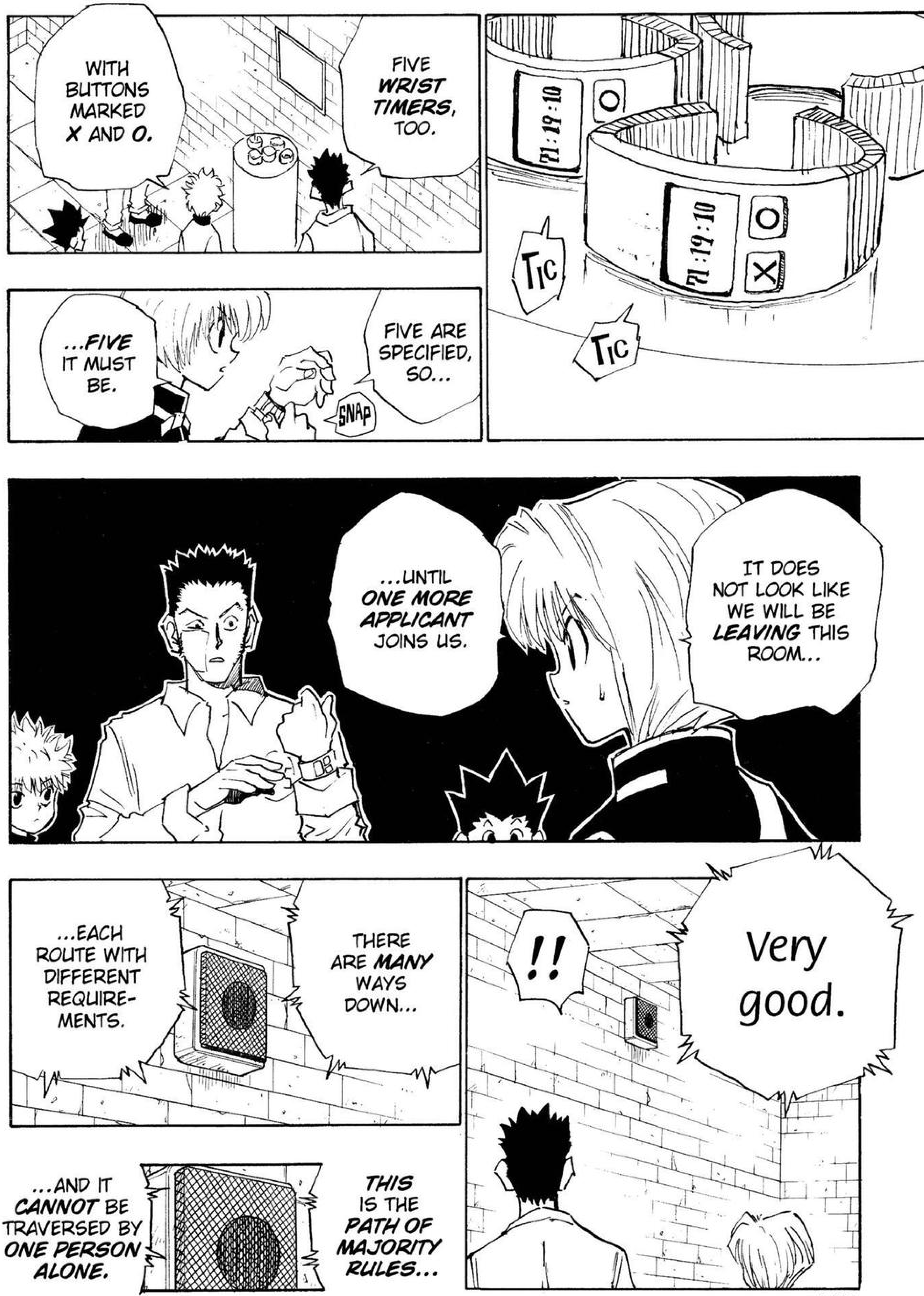

GUESS IT'S ONE TRAPDOOR …
…PER APPLICANT. WE'RE EACH ON OUR OWN.
HMM …
…COULD BE. THEY'RE BARELY WIDE ENOUGH FOR ONE PERSON.
CREEAK
403
GON AND I FIGURE WE'LL EACH PICK ONE.
IF THEY'RE TRAPS… OH WELL.
HOW ABOUT YOU GUYS?
99

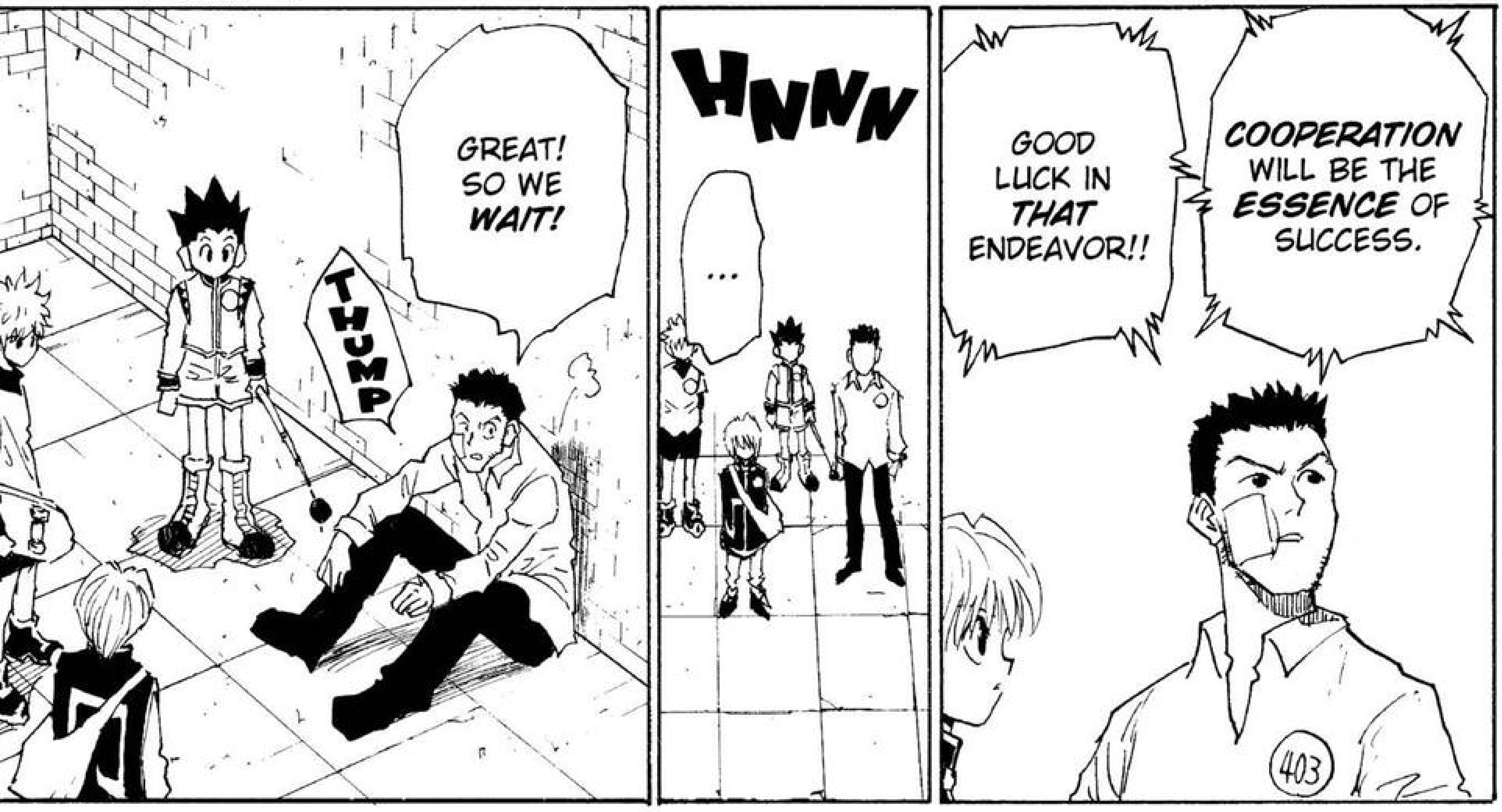

AW, WHY NOT?!
THIS MAY BE A TEST OF LUCK!
WHO GETS TO PICK FIRST?
403
ROCK, PAPER, SCISSORS!!
OKAY, THAT'S SETTLED.
ON THE COUNT OF THREE, WE ALL HOP IN!
GUESS IT'S SO LONG FOR NOW.
SEE YA ON THE GROUND.
RIGHT.
ONE...
TWO...
THREE!!

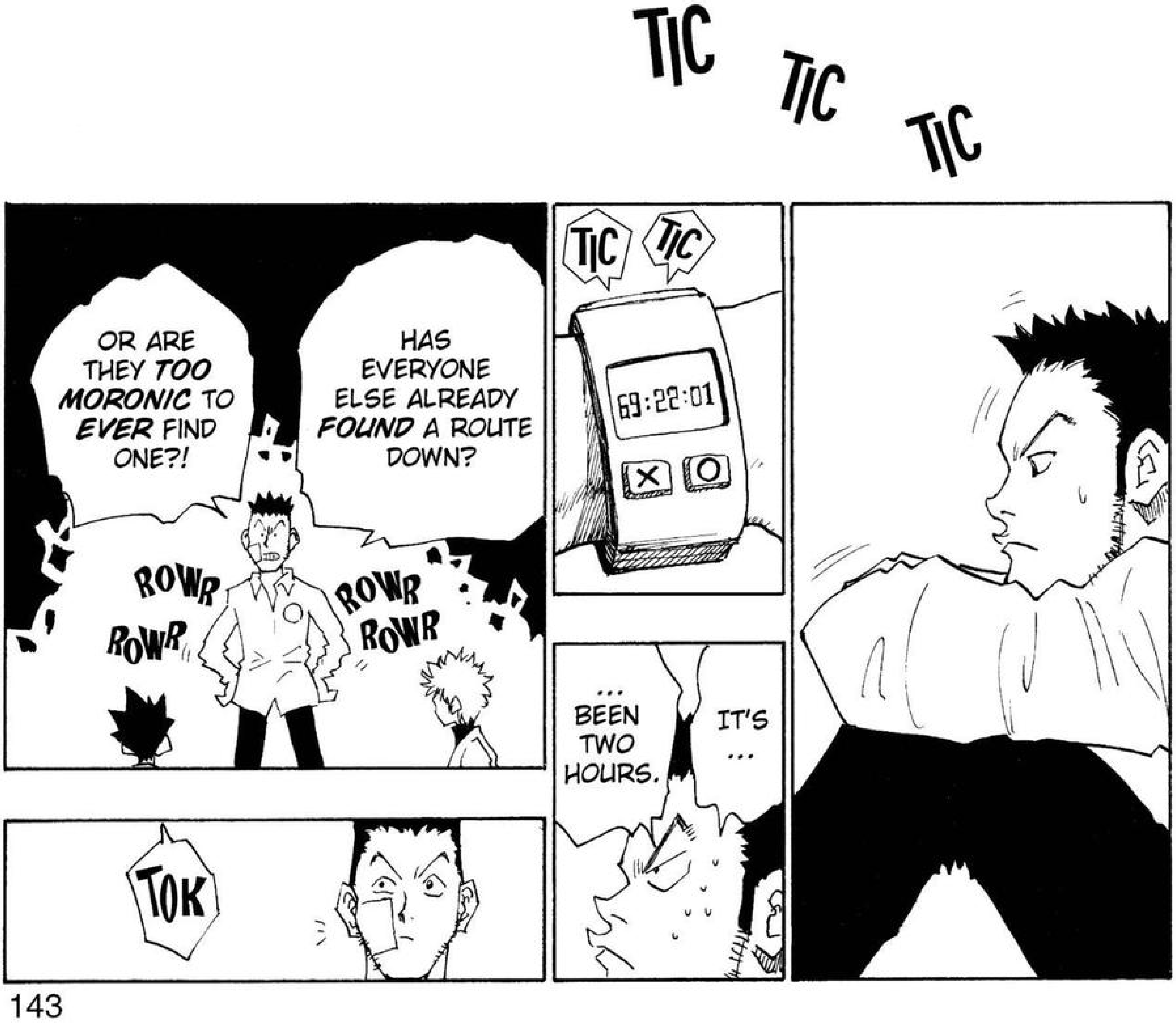

TUMP!
TUP
OW!!
THUNK!
THUP
?!
...

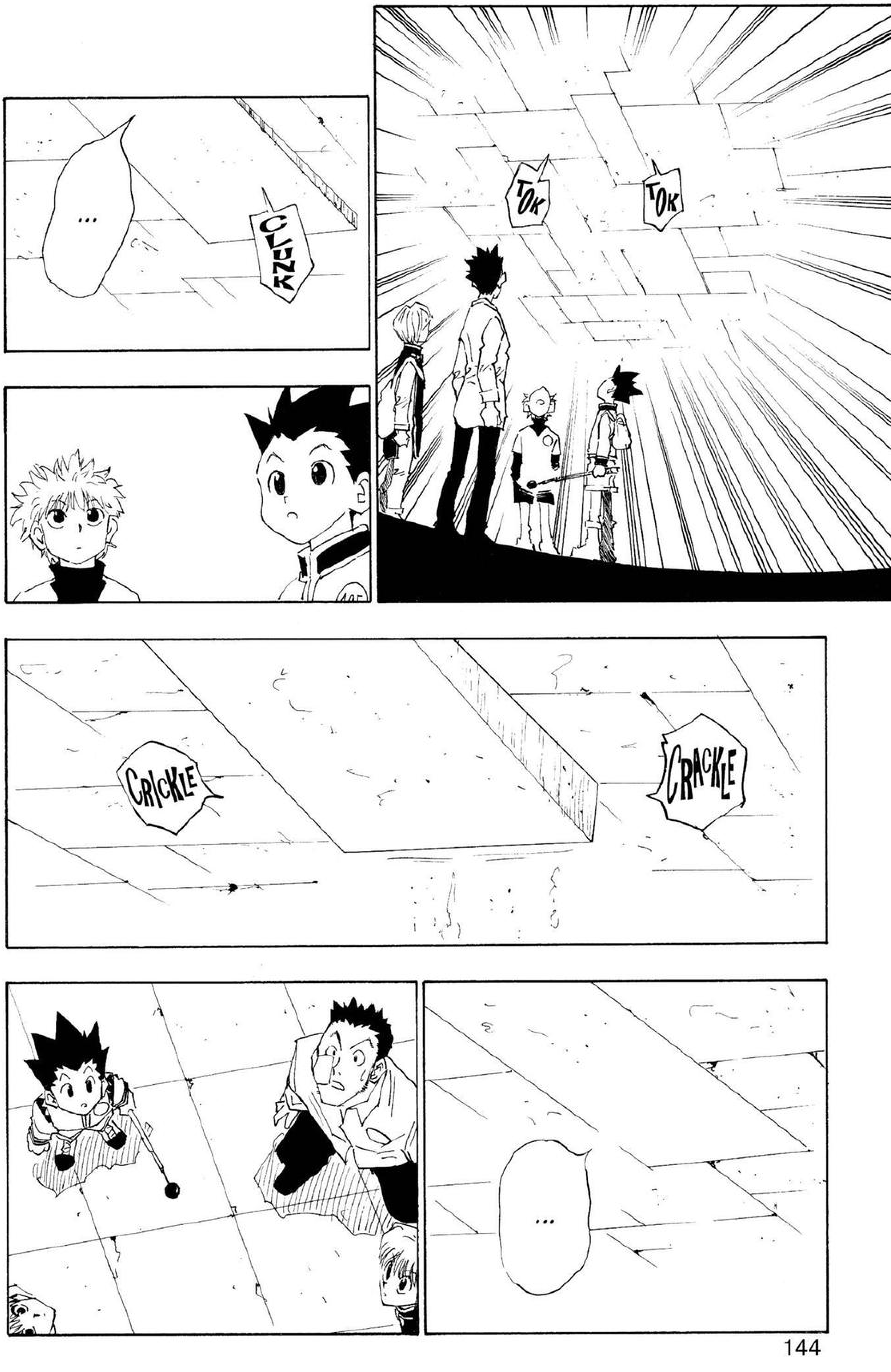
READ THIS WAY

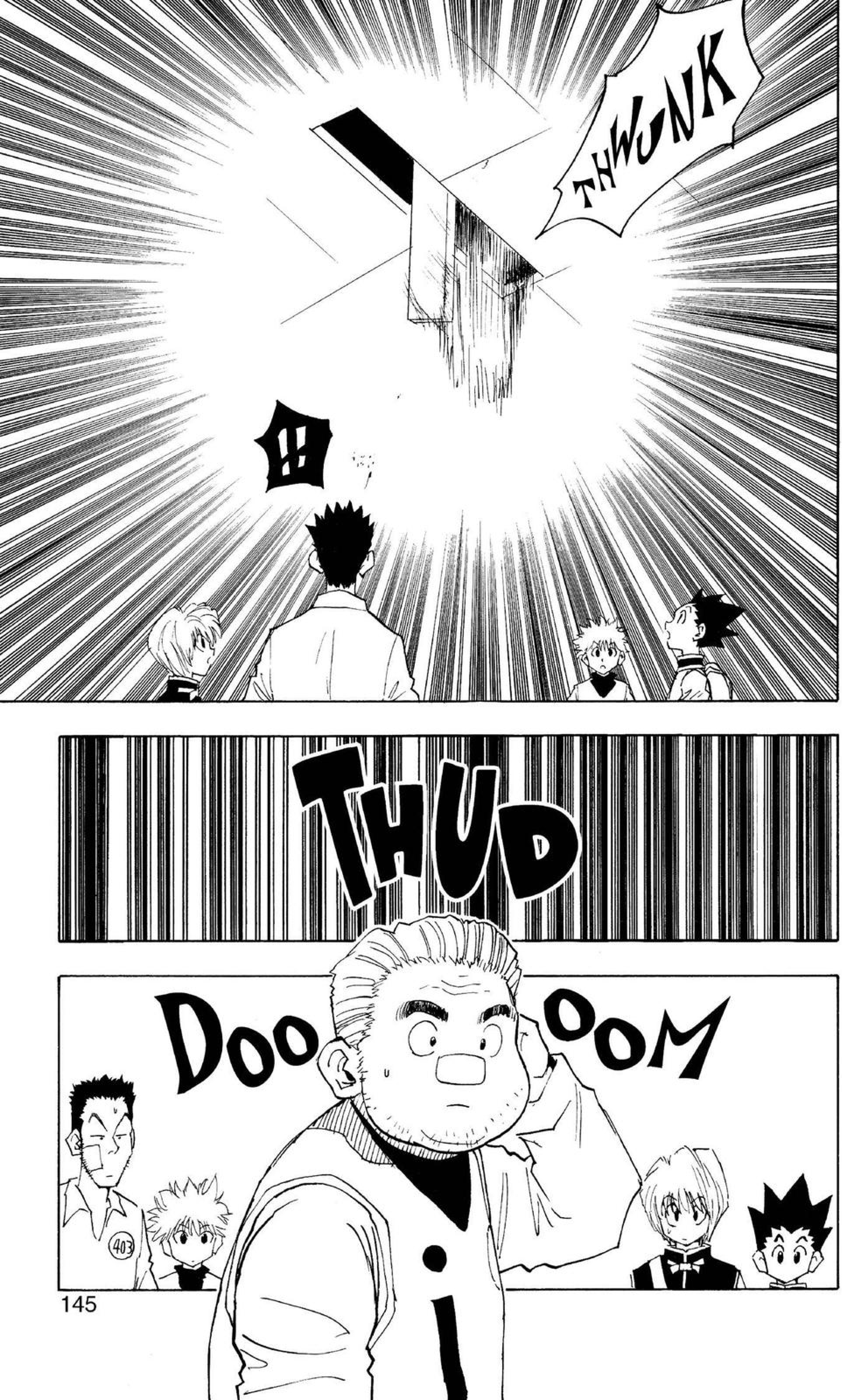

ALL FOUR DOORS DROPPED US IN HERE? WHAT A GYP!
YEP.
SHORT TRIP.
THERE DOESN'T ...
...SEEM TO BE AN EXIT.
EH?
The Path of Majority Rules
The five who drop into this chamber must find their way down together by consensus of the majority.
FIVE ...?
403
404
99

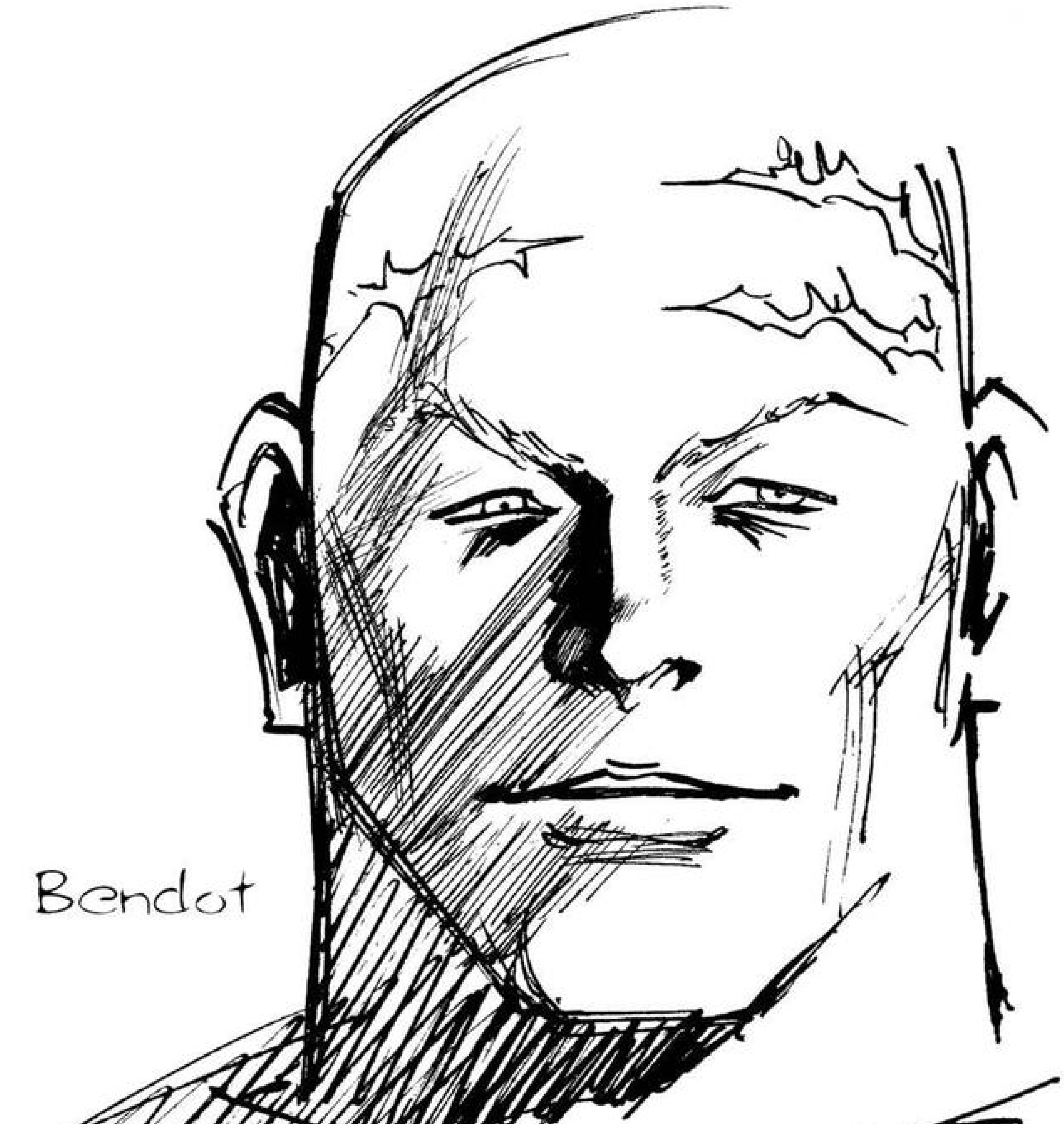

71:19:10
○
71:19:10
○
X
TIC
TIC
FIVE *WRIST TIMERS*, TOO.
WITH BUTTONS MARKED *X* AND *O*.
FIVE ARE SPECIFIED, SO...
SNAP
...*FIVE* IT MUST BE.
IT DOES NOT LOOK LIKE WE WILL BE *LEAVING* THIS ROOM...
...UNTIL *ONE MORE APPLICANT* JOINS US.
Very good.
!!
THERE ARE *MANY* WAYS DOWN...
...EACH ROUTE WITH DIFFERENT REQUIREMENTS.
THIS IS THE *PATH OF MAJORITY RULES...*
...AND IT *CANNOT* BE TRAVERSED BY *ONE PERSON ALONE.*

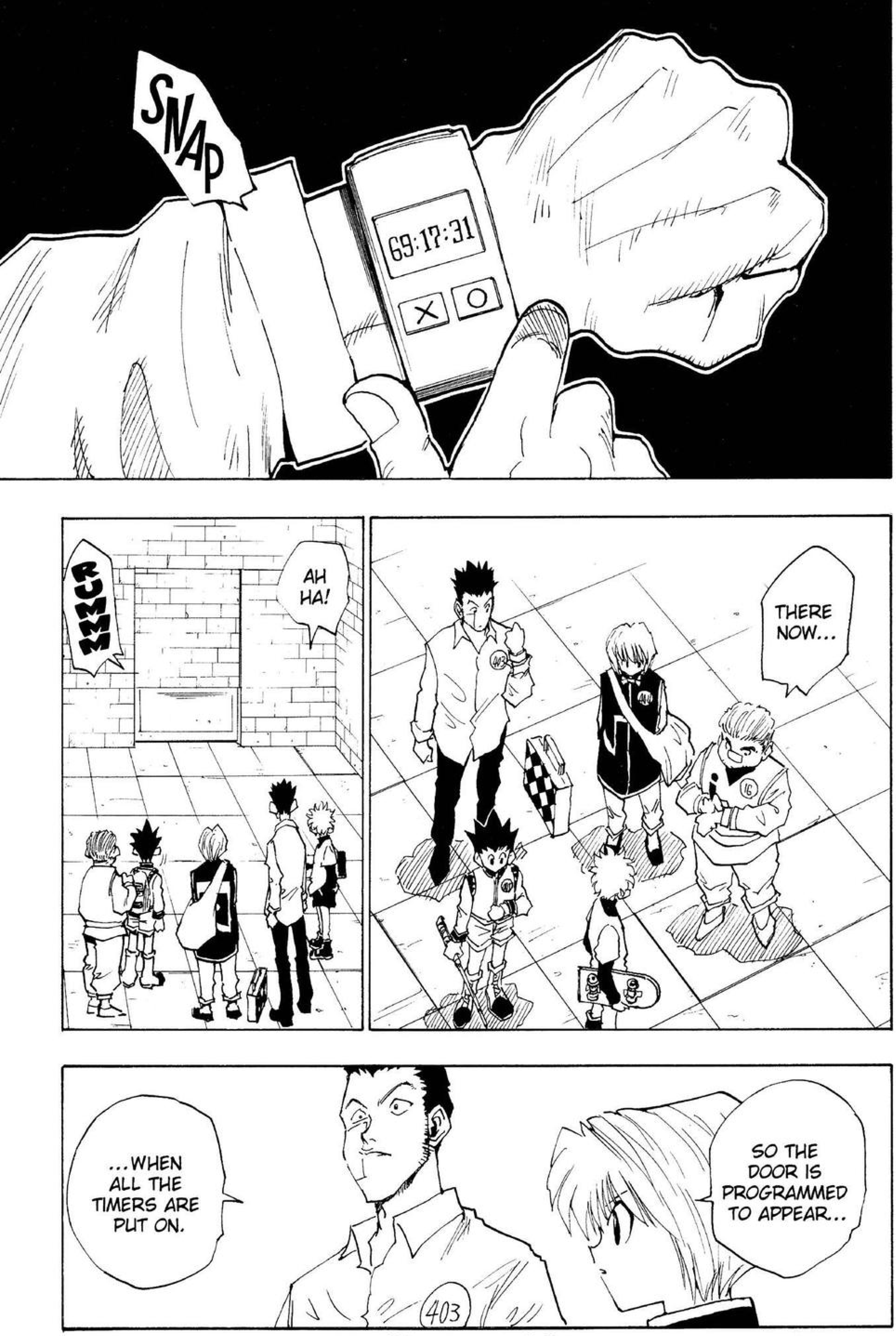

COOPERATION WILL BE THE ESSENCE OF SUCCESS.
GOOD LUCK IN THAT ENDEAVOR!!
403
HNNN
...
GREAT! SO WE WAIT!
THUMP


TIC
TIC
TIC
TIC
TIC
69:22:01
✕ ○
IT'S ...
... BEEN TWO HOURS.
HAS EVERYONE ELSE ALREADY FOUND A ROUTE DOWN?
OR ARE THEY TOO MORONIC TO EVER FIND ONE?!
ROWR
ROWR
ROWR
ROWR
TOK


TOK
TOK
CLUNK
...
CRACKLE
CRICKLE
...


THWUNK
!!
THUD
DOO
OOM
403


Bendot

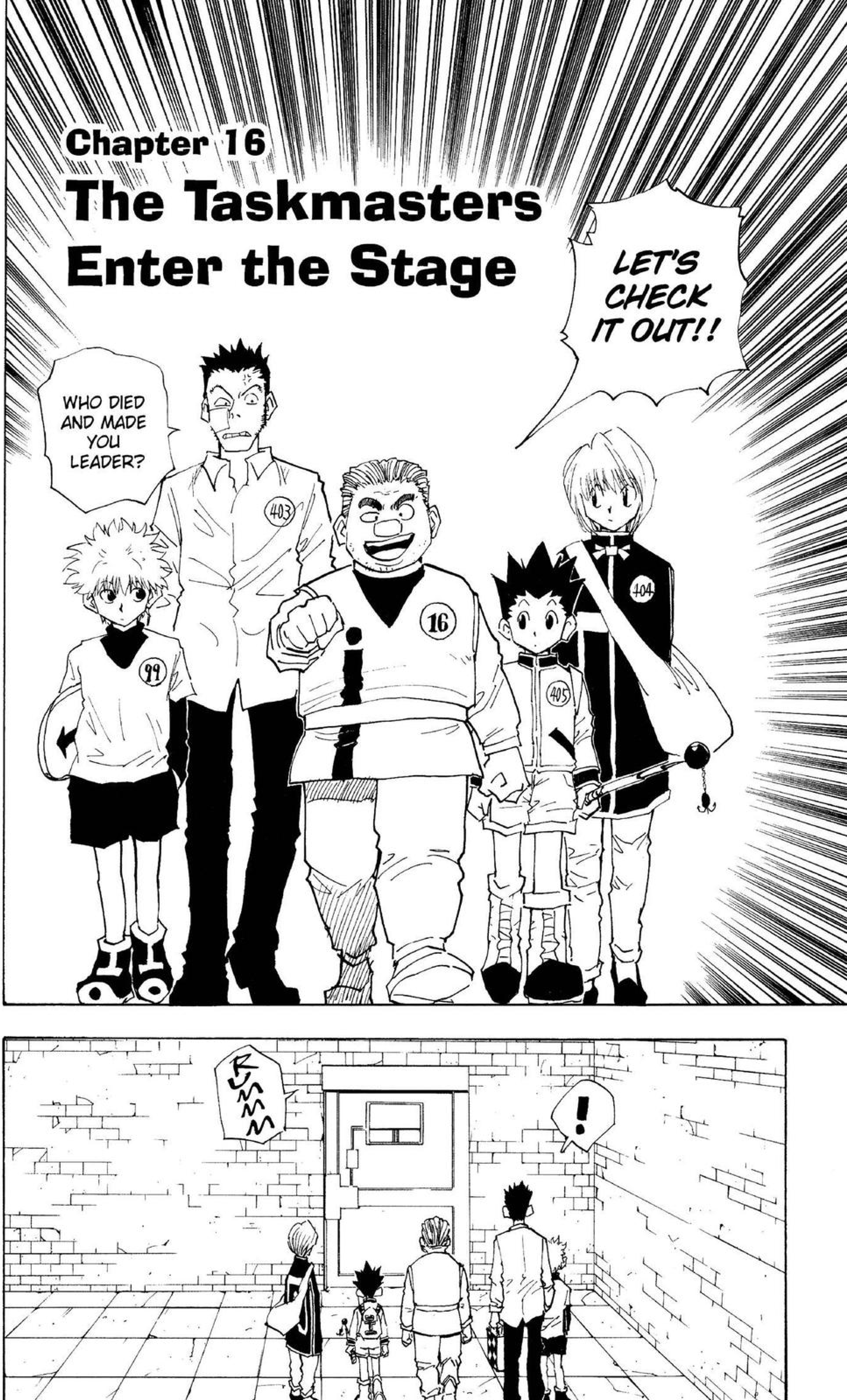

SNAP
69:17:31
×
○
THERE NOW...
AH HA!
RUMMM
403
16
SO THE DOOR IS PROGRAMMED TO APPEAR...
...WHEN ALL THE TIMERS ARE PUT ON.
403

Chapter 16

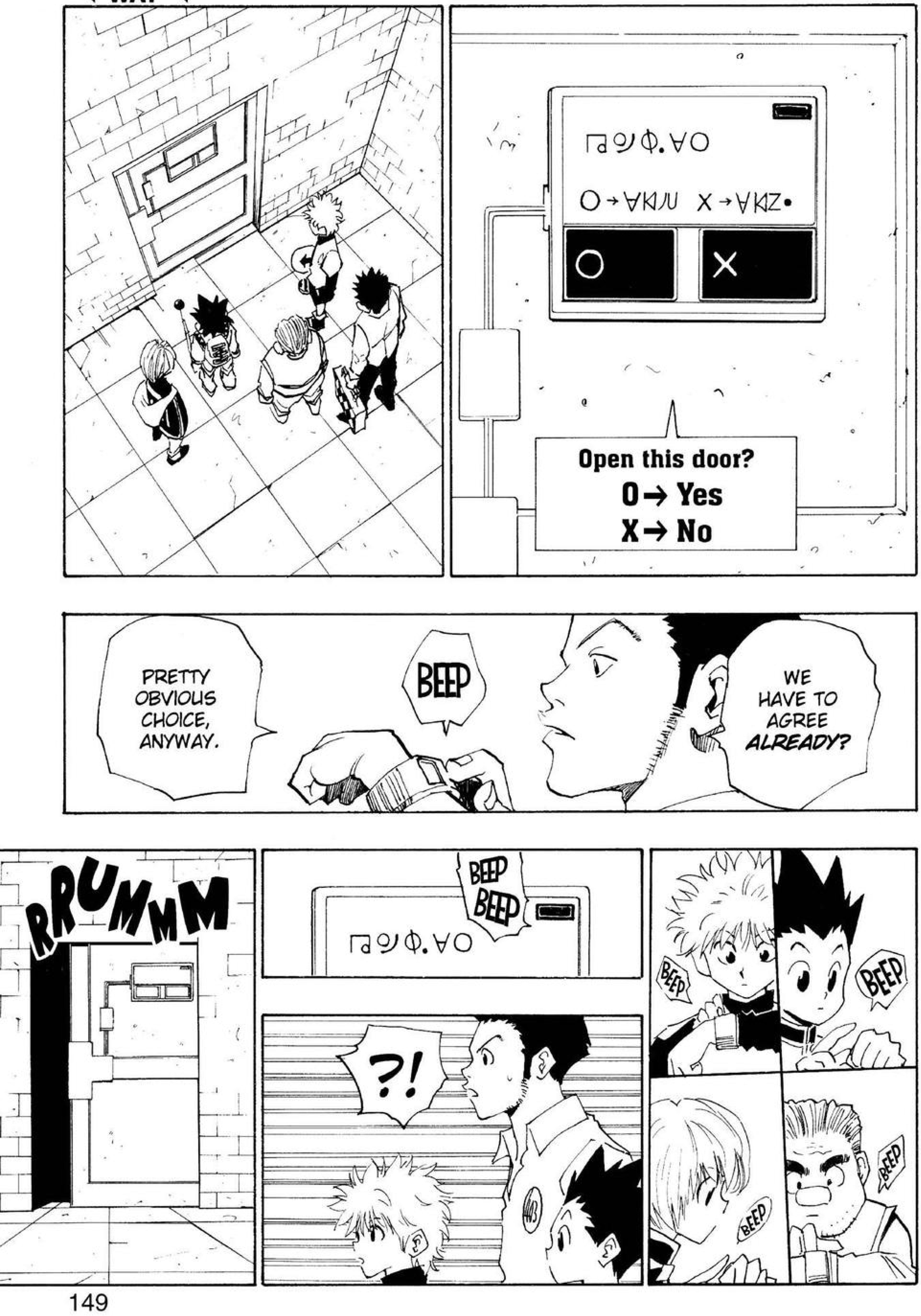
The Taskmasters Enter the Stage

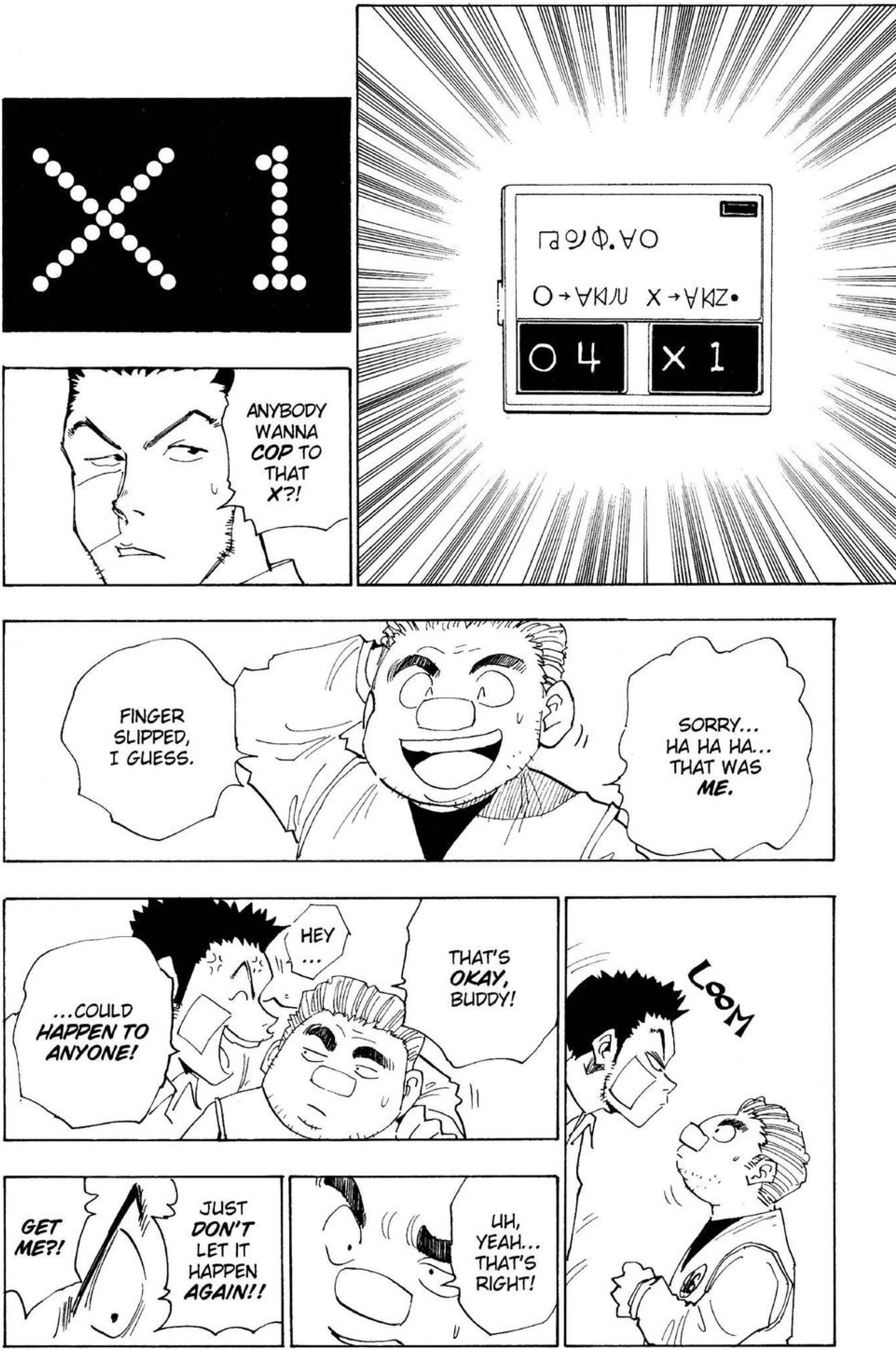
Chapter 16

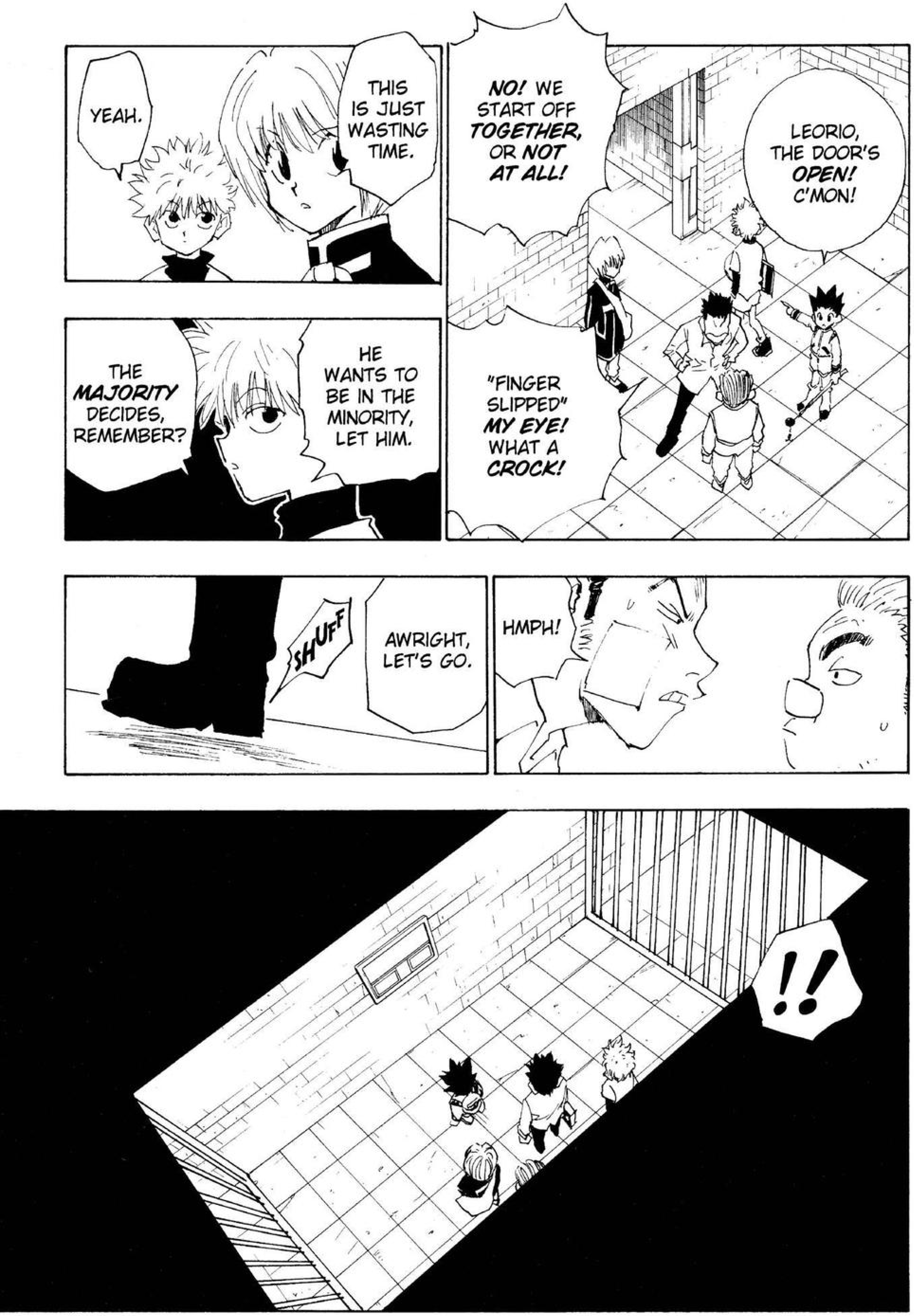
The Taskmasters Enter the Stage

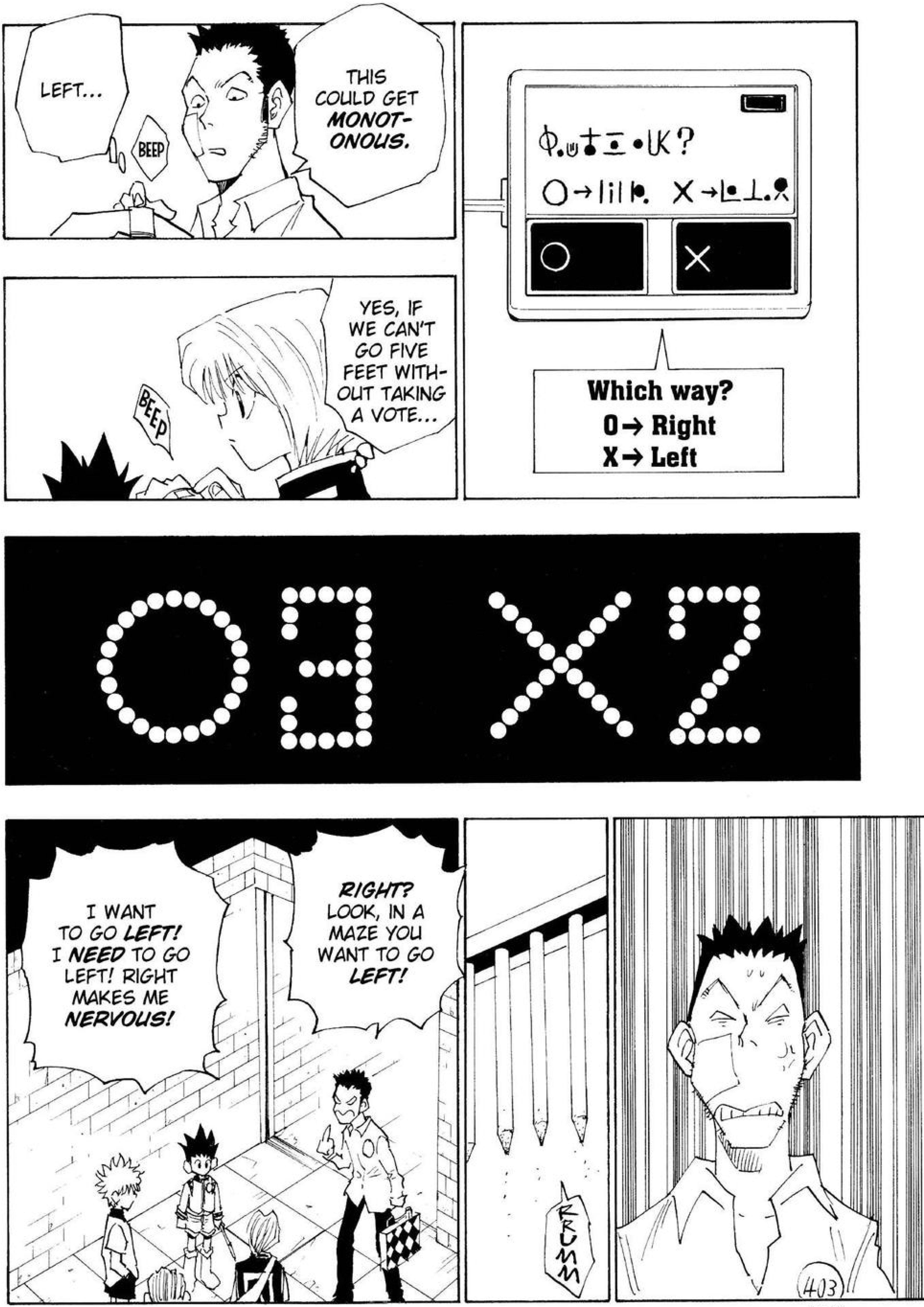

LET'S CHECK IT OUT!!
WHO DIED AND MADE YOU LEADER?
404
405
16
403
99
!
RUMMM

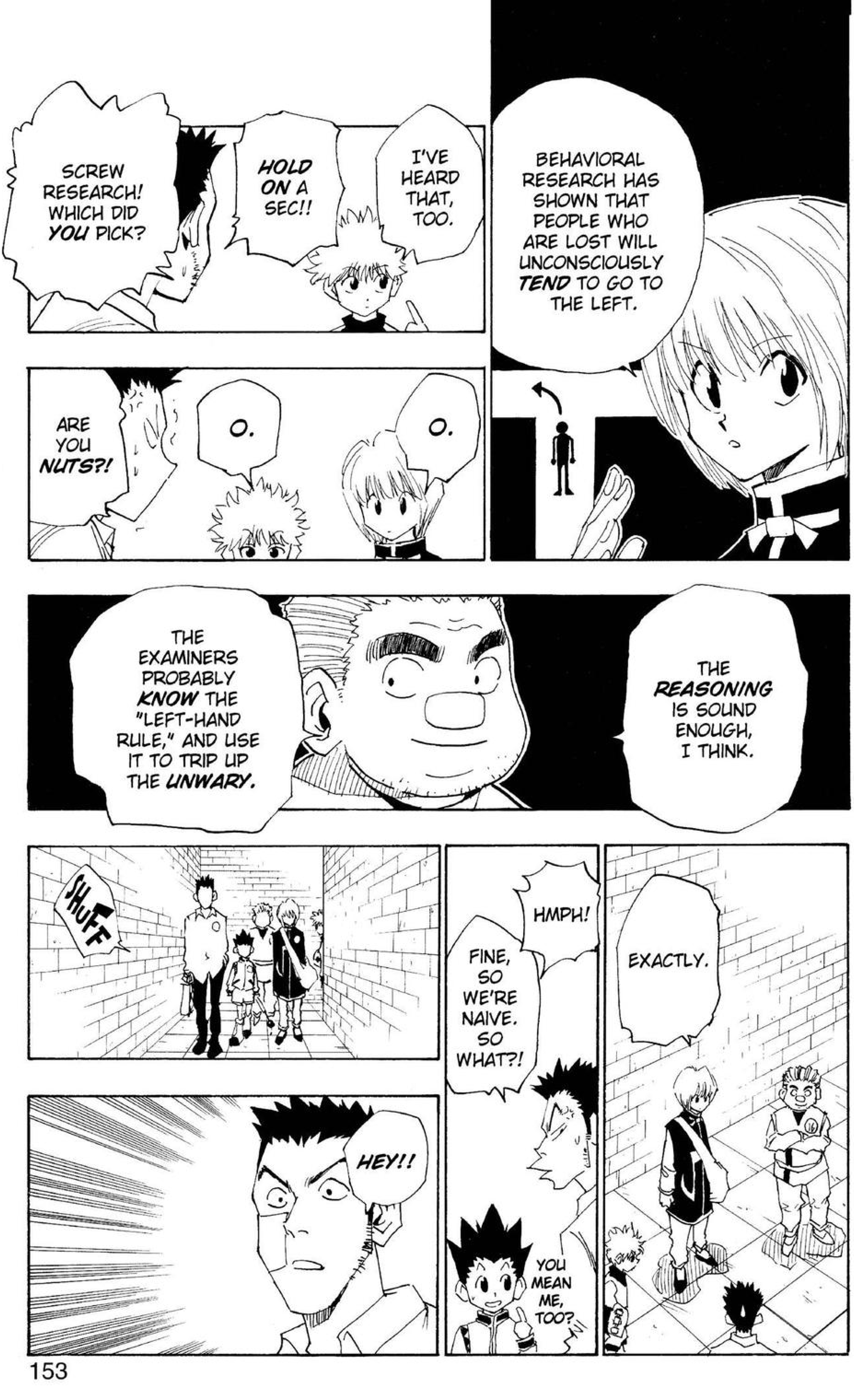
READ THIS WAY

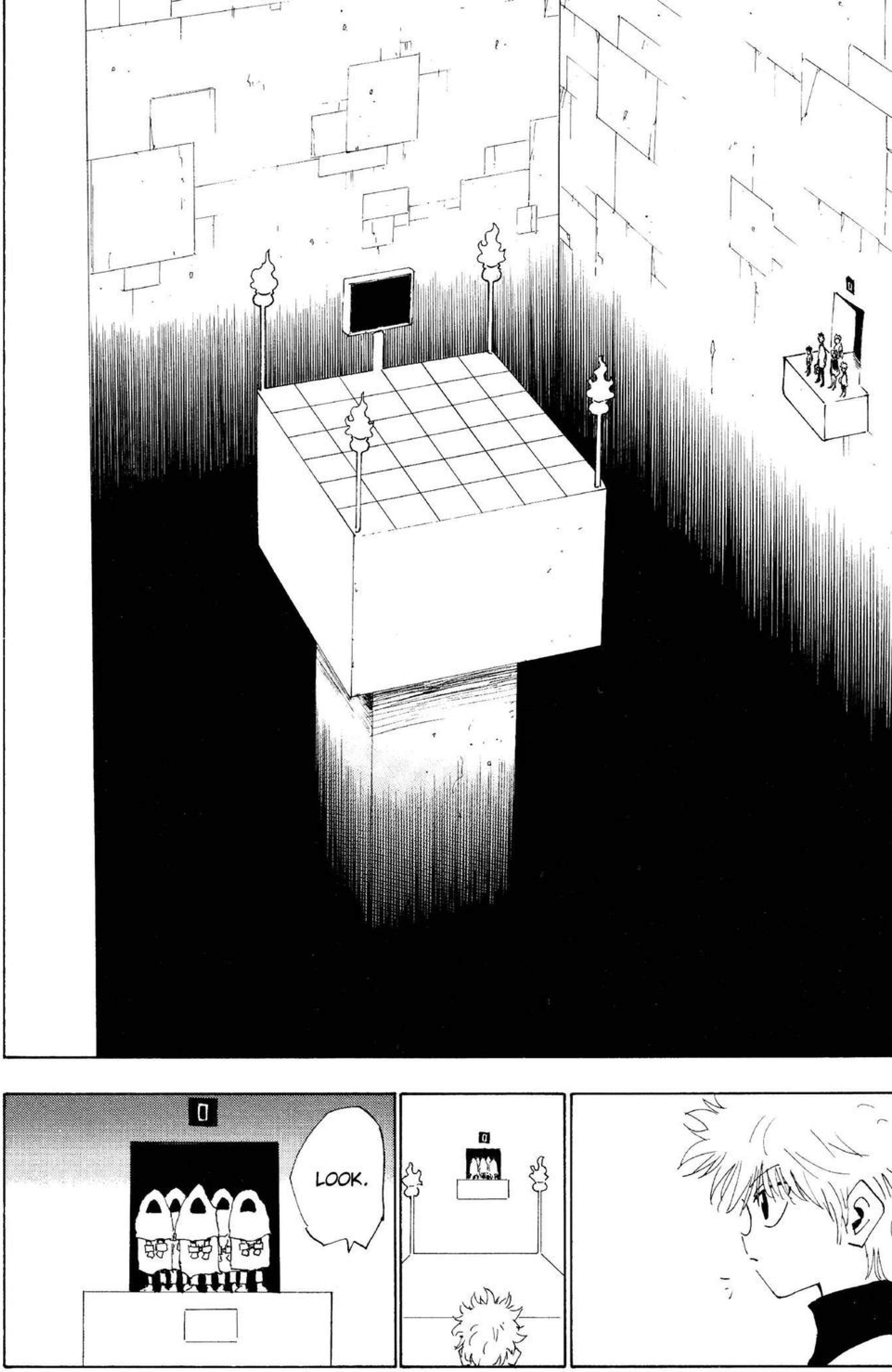

O
X
Open this door?
O → Yes
X → No
WE HAVE TO AGREE ALREADY?
BEEP
PRETTY OBVIOUS CHOICE, ANYWAY.
BEEP
BEEP
BEEP
BEEP
BEEP BEEP
?!
RRUMMM

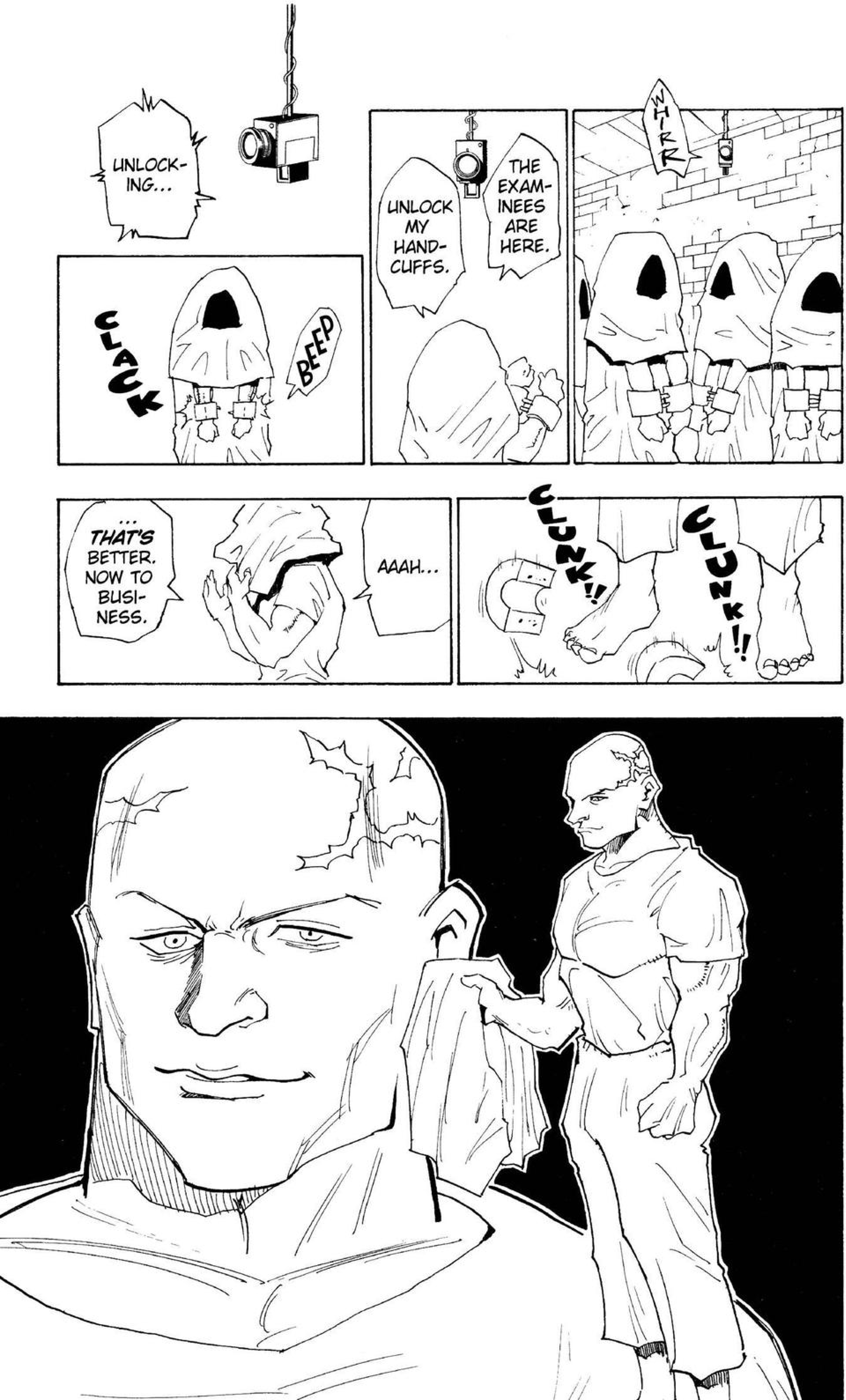

○ 4
× 1
× 1
ANYBODY WANNA **COP** TO THAT ***X***?!
SORRY... HA HA HA... THAT WAS ***ME.***
FINGER SLIPPED, I GUESS.
LOOM
HEY...
THAT'S ***OKAY,*** BUDDY!
...COULD ***HAPPEN TO ANYONE!***
UH, YEAH... THAT'S RIGHT!
JUST ***DON'T*** LET IT HAPPEN ***AGAIN!!***
GET ME?!

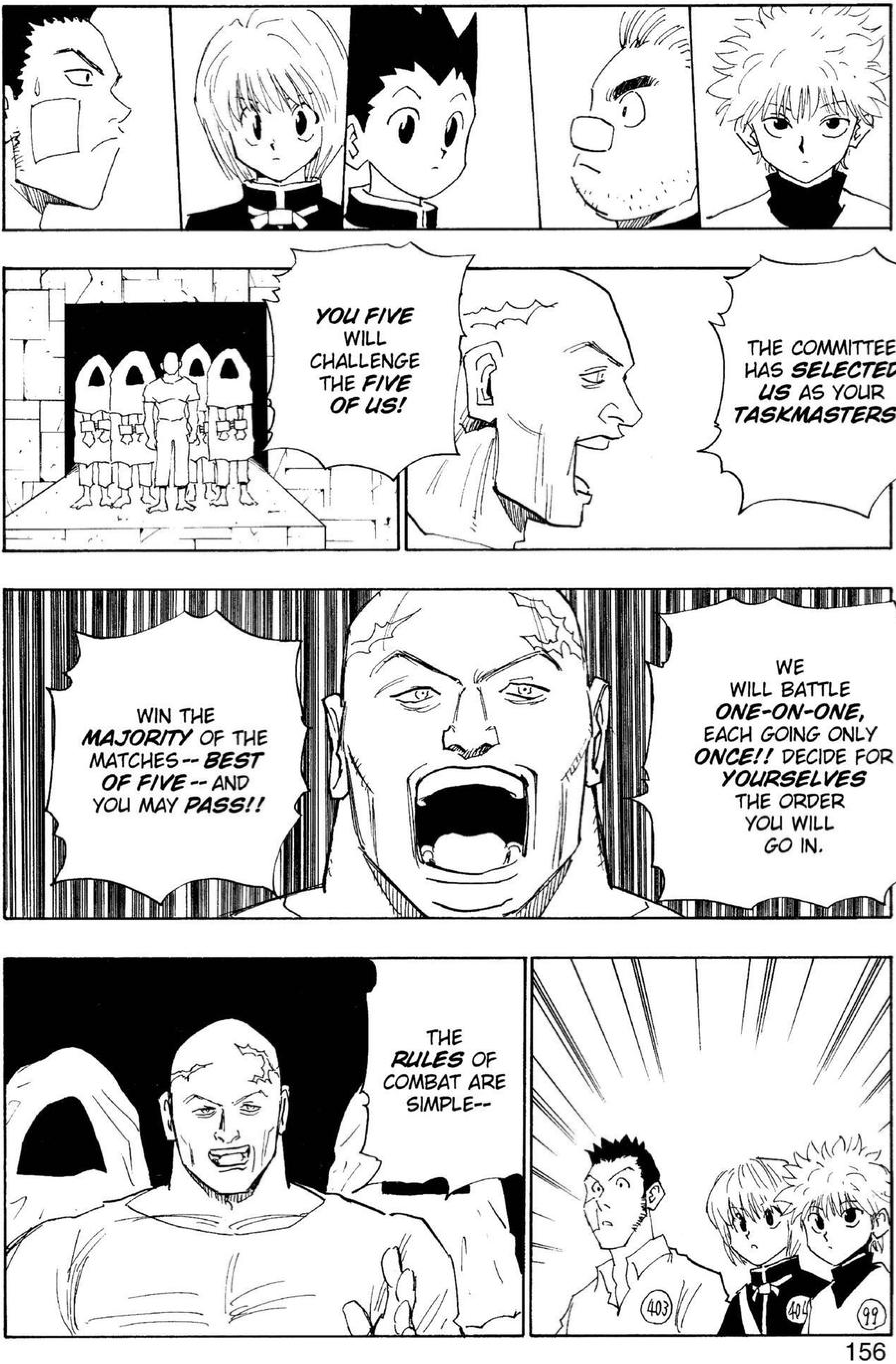

LEORIO, THE DOOR'S **OPEN!** C'MON!
NO! WE START OFF ***TOGETHER,*** OR ***NOT AT ALL!***
"FINGER SLIPPED" ***MY EYE!*** WHAT A ***CROCK!***
THIS IS JUST WASTING TIME.
YEAH.
HE WANTS TO BE IN THE MINORITY, LET HIM.
THE ***MAJORITY*** DECIDES, REMEMBER?
HMPH!
AWRIGHT, LET'S GO.
SHUFF
!!

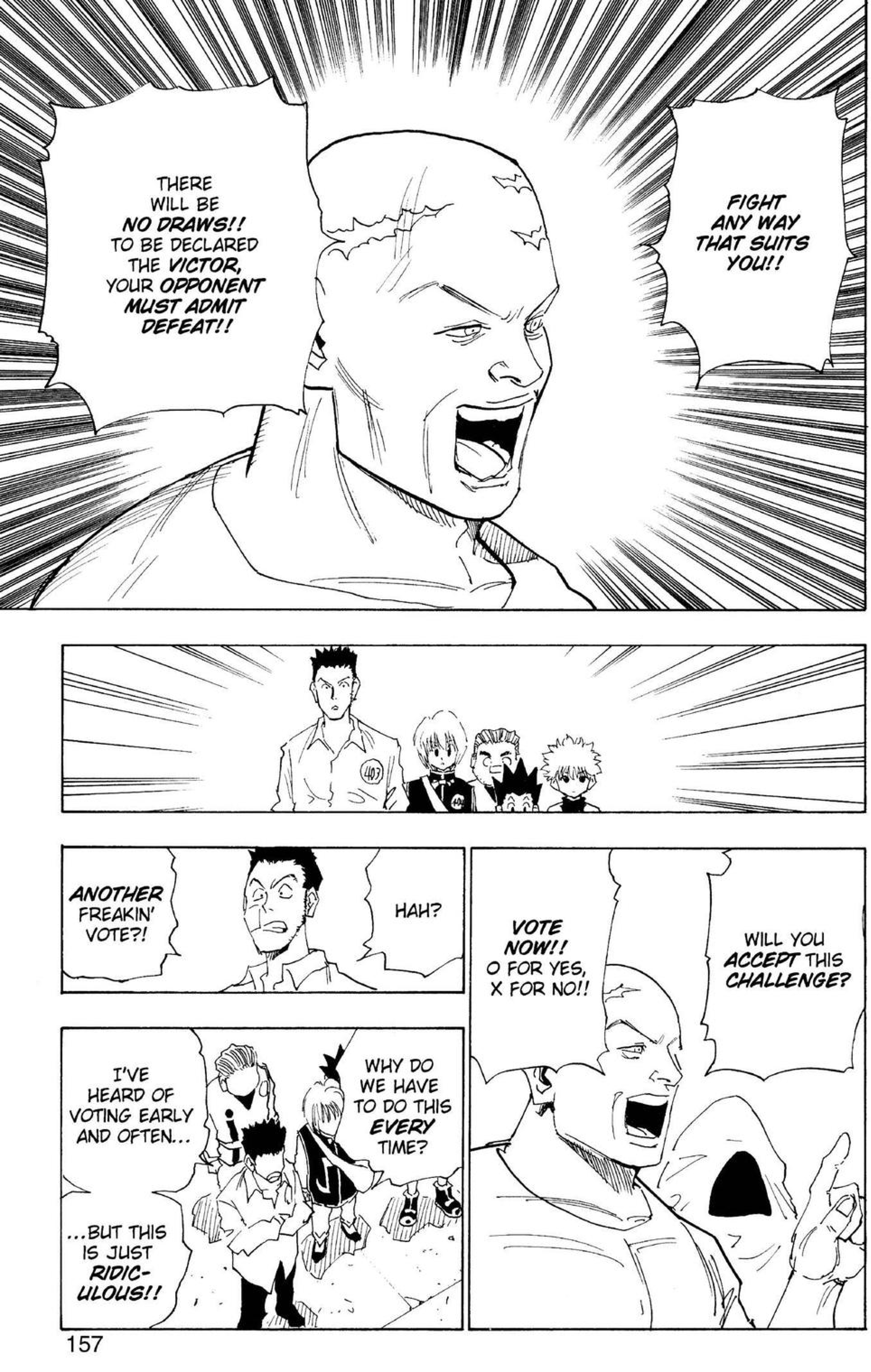

Which way?
O→ Right
X→ Left
LEFT...
BEEP
THIS COULD GET MONOTONOUS.
YES, IF WE CAN'T GO FIVE FEET WITHOUT TAKING A VOTE...
BEEP
O3 X2
403
RRUMM
RIGHT? LOOK, IN A MAZE YOU WANT TO GO LEFT!
I WANT TO GO LEFT! I NEED TO GO LEFT! RIGHT MAKES ME NERVOUS!

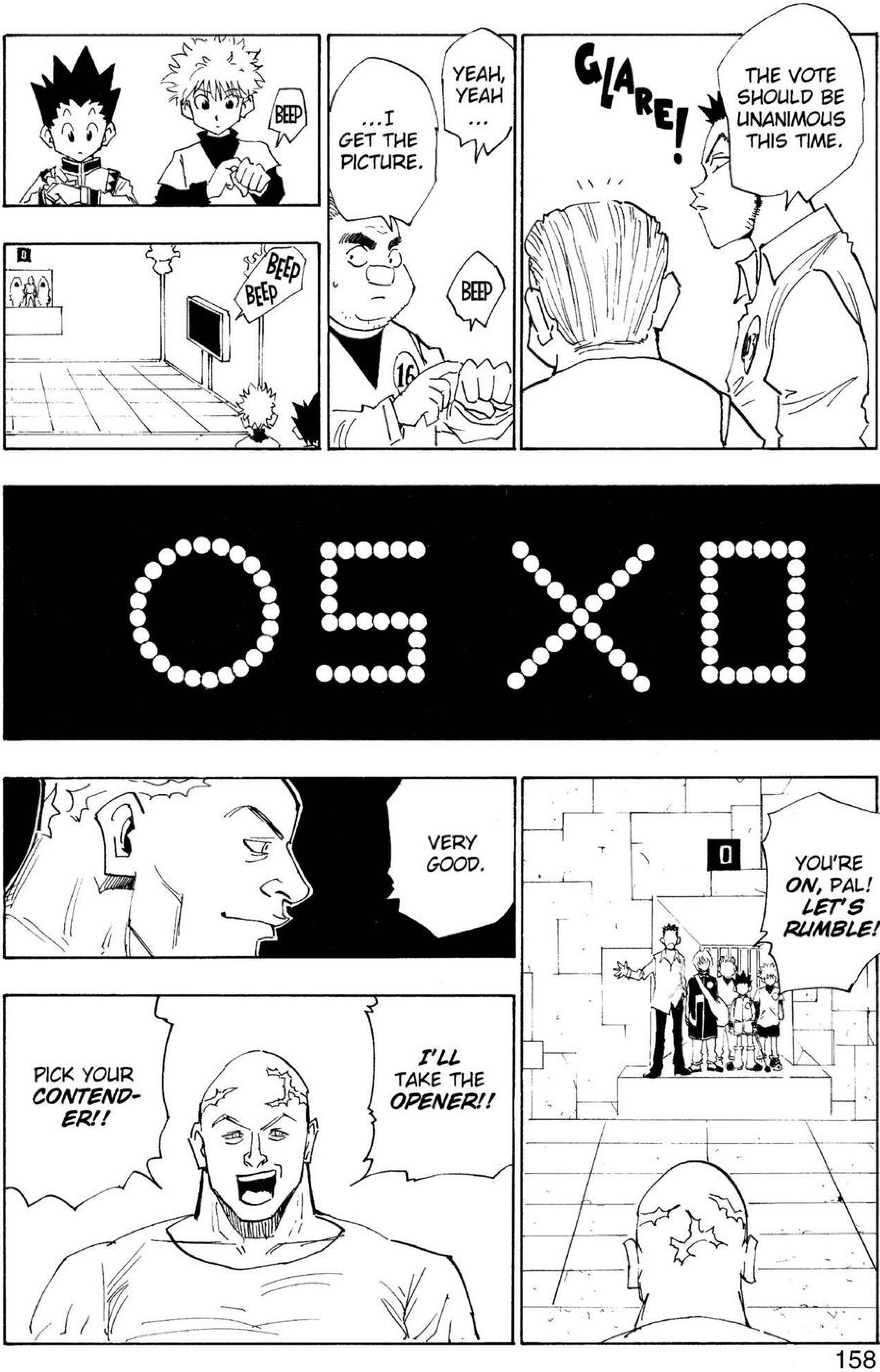

BEHAVIORAL RESEARCH HAS SHOWN THAT PEOPLE WHO ARE LOST WILL UNCONSCIOUSLY *TEND* TO GO TO THE LEFT.
I'VE HEARD THAT, TOO.
HOLD ON A SEC!!
SCREW RESEARCH! WHICH DID *YOU* PICK?
O.
O.
ARE YOU *NUTS?!*
THE *REASONING* IS SOUND ENOUGH, I THINK.
THE EXAMINERS PROBABLY *KNOW* THE "LEFT-HAND RULE," AND USE IT TO TRIP UP THE *UNWARY.*
EXACTLY.
HMPH!
FINE, SO WE'RE NAIVE. SO WHAT?!
YOU MEAN ME, TOO?
SHUFF
HEY!!


0
0
LOOK.
0

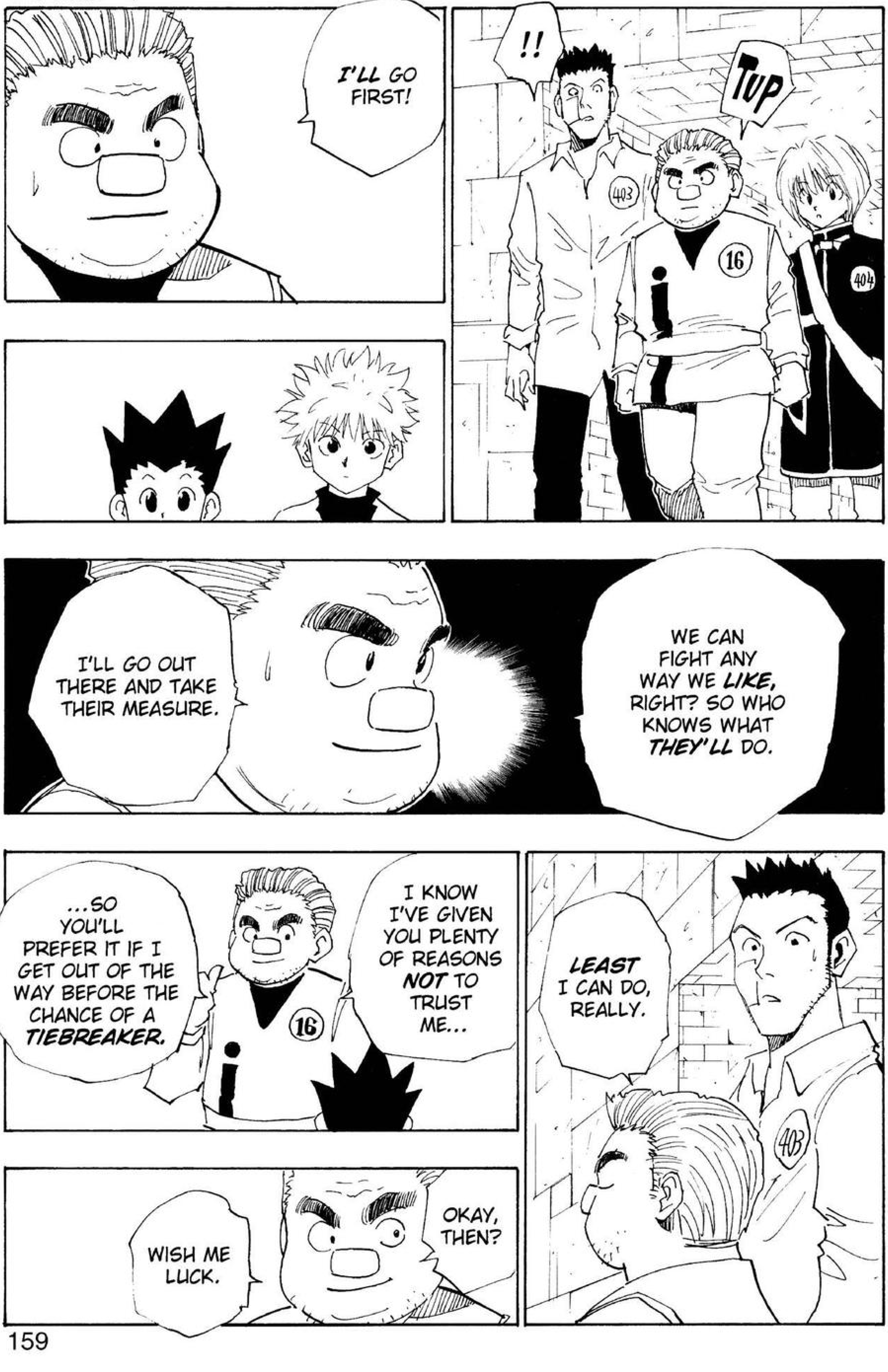

THE EXAMINEES ARE HERE.
UNLOCK MY HANDCUFFS.
WHIRR
UNLOCKING...
CLACK
BEEP
AAAH...
... *THAT'S* BETTER. NOW TO BUSINESS.
CLUNK!!
CLUNK!!

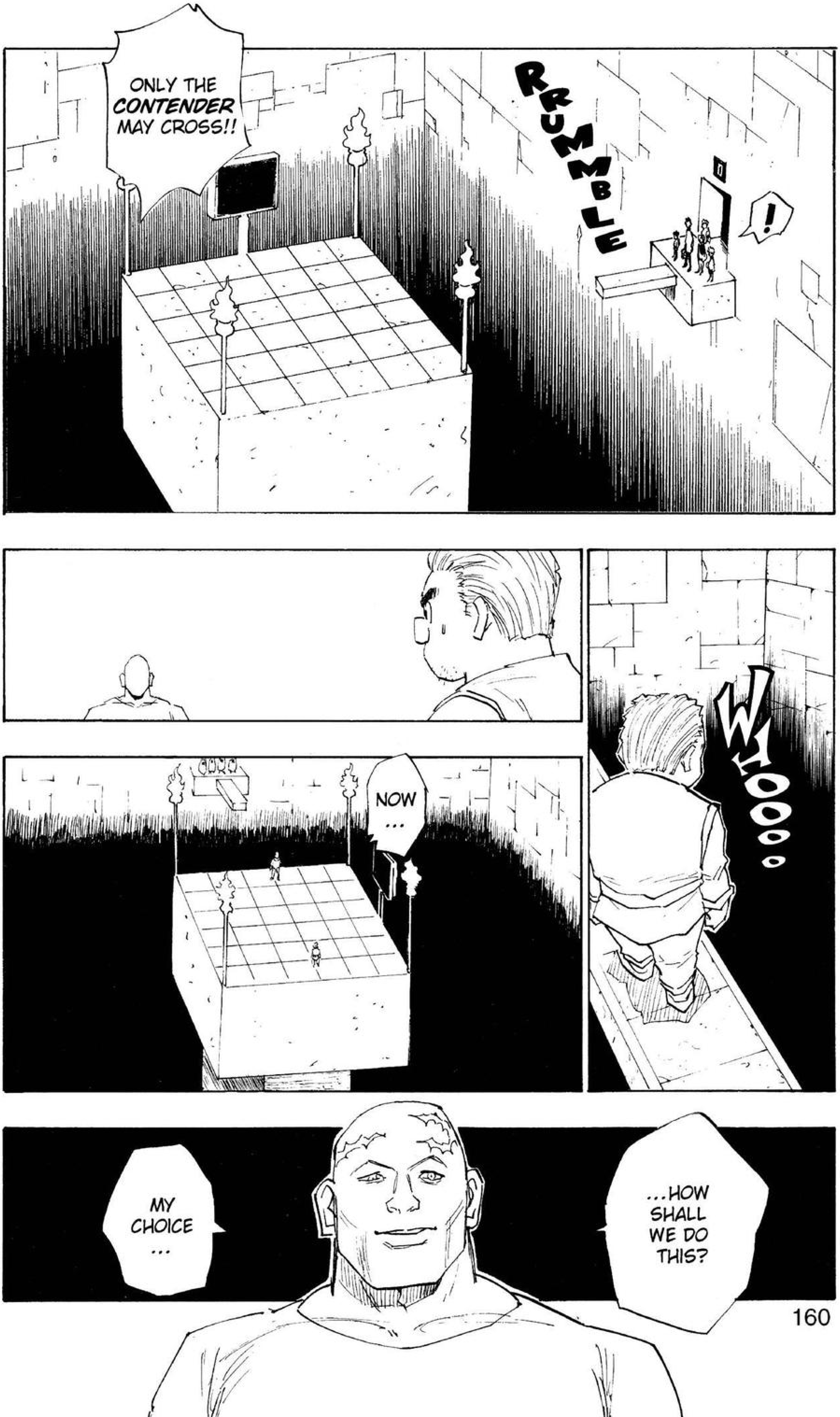

THE COMMITTEE HAS **SELECTED US** AS YOUR **TASKMASTERS!!**
YOU FIVE WILL CHALLENGE THE ***FIVE OF US!***
WE WILL BATTLE ***ONE-ON-ONE,*** EACH GOING ONLY ***ONCE!!*** DECIDE FOR ***YOURSELVES*** THE ORDER YOU WILL GO IN.
WIN THE ***MAJORITY*** OF THE MATCHES-- ***BEST OF FIVE*** --AND YOU MAY ***PASS!!***
THE ***RULES*** OF COMBAT ARE SIMPLE--
403
404
99

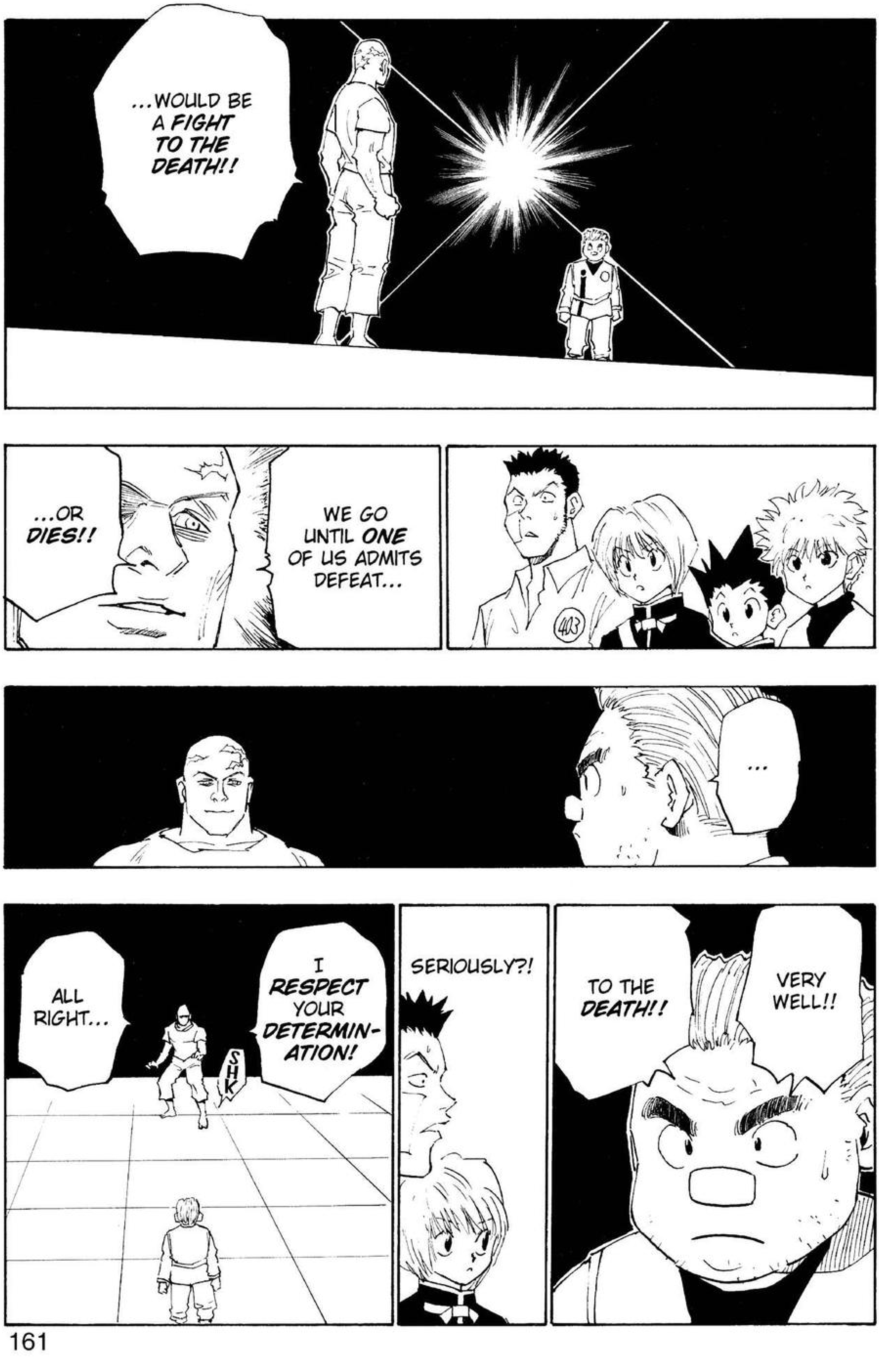

FIGHT ANY WAY THAT SUITS YOU!!
THERE WILL BE NO DRAWS!! TO BE DECLARED THE VICTOR, YOUR OPPONENT MUST ADMIT DEFEAT!!
407
WILL YOU ACCEPT THIS CHALLENGE?
VOTE NOW!! O FOR YES, X FOR NO!!
HAH?
ANOTHER FREAKIN' VOTE?!
WHY DO WE HAVE TO DO THIS EVERY TIME?
I'VE HEARD OF VOTING EARLY AND OFTEN...
...BUT THIS IS JUST RIDICULOUS!!

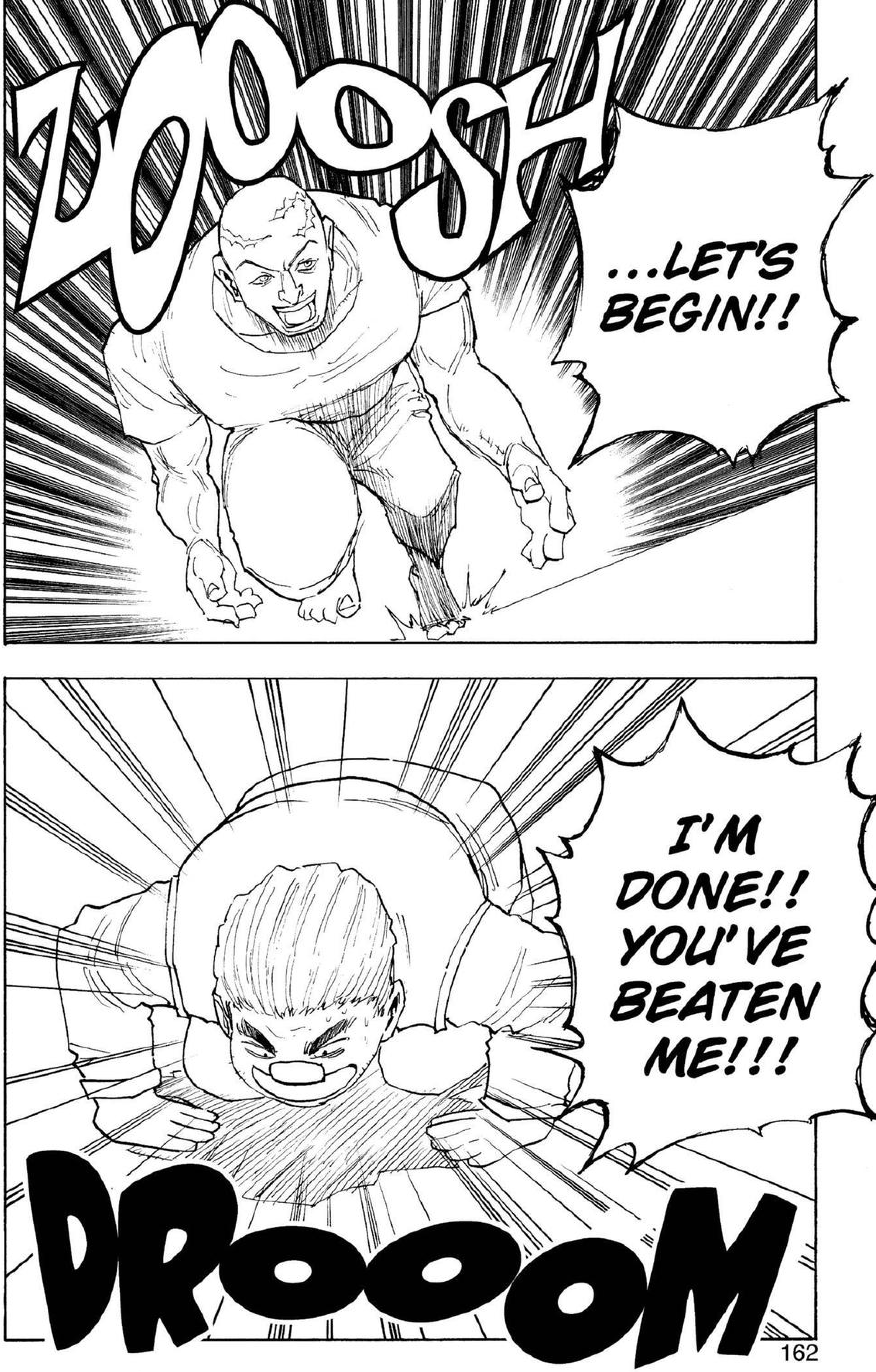

GLARE!
THE VOTE SHOULD BE UNANIMOUS THIS TIME.
YEAH, YEAH ...
...I GET THE PICTURE.
BEEP
BEEP
BEEP
BEEP
O5 X0
YOU'RE ON, PAL! LET'S RUMBLE!
VERY GOOD.
I'LL TAKE THE OPENER!!
PICK YOUR CONTENDER!!

READ THIS WAY

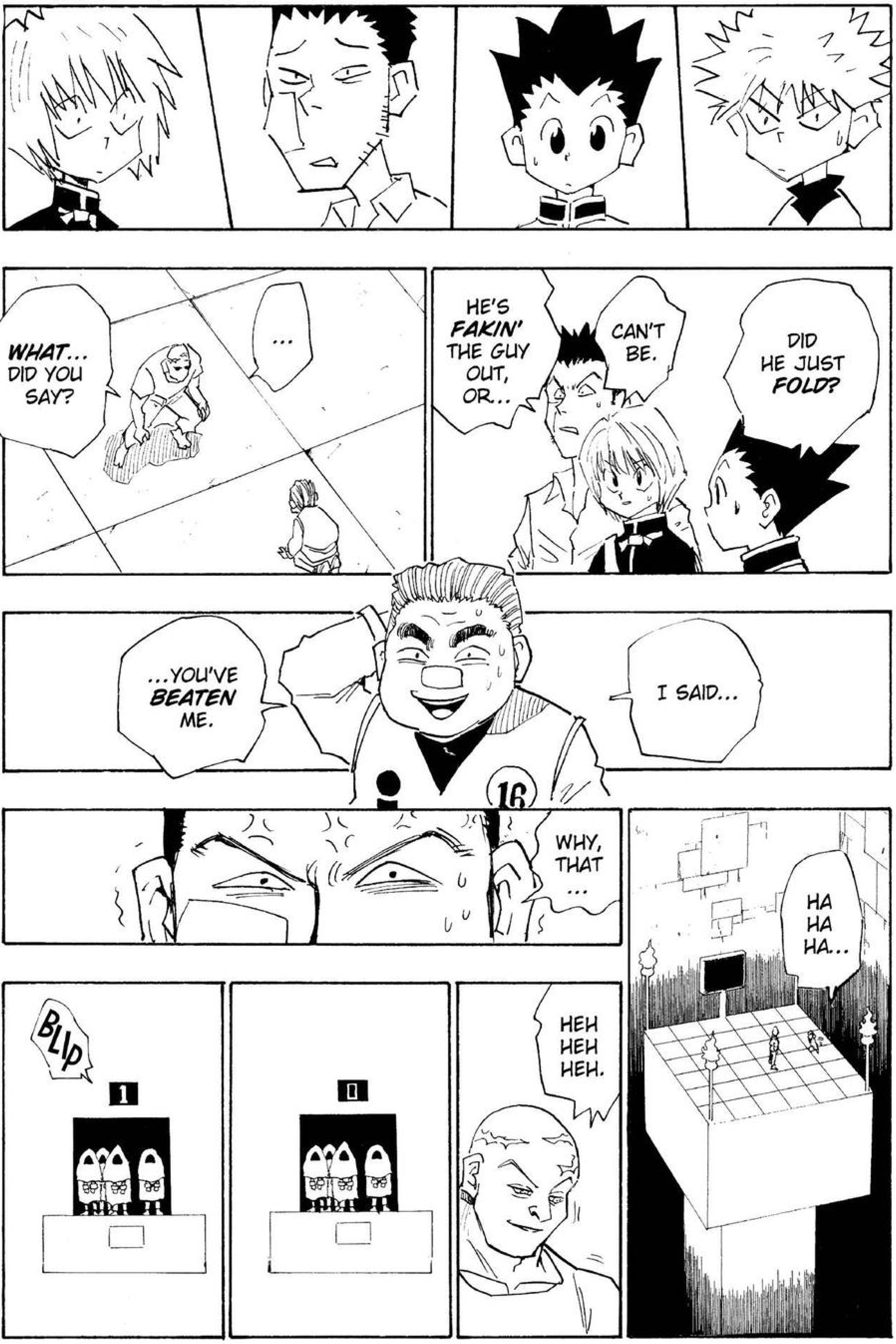

I'LL GO FIRST!
!!
TUP
403
16
404
WE CAN FIGHT ANY WAY WE LIKE, RIGHT? SO WHO KNOWS WHAT THEY'LL DO.
I'LL GO OUT THERE AND TAKE THEIR MEASURE.
I KNOW I'VE GIVEN YOU PLENTY OF REASONS NOT TO TRUST ME...
...SO YOU'LL PREFER IT IF I GET OUT OF THE WAY BEFORE THE CHANCE OF A TIEBREAKER.
16
LEAST I CAN DO, REALLY.
403
OKAY, THEN?
WISH ME LUCK.

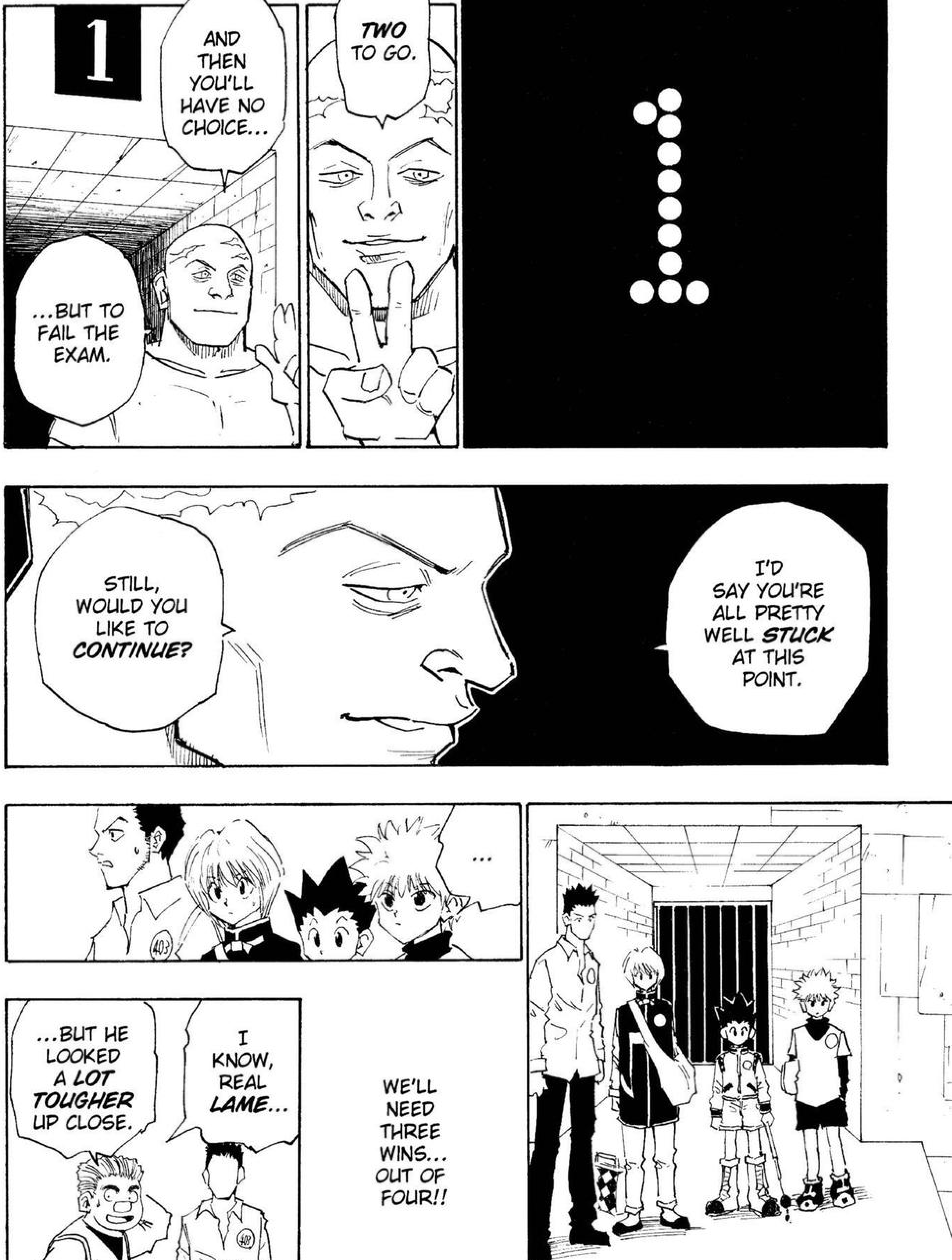

RRUMBLE
!
ONLY THE **CONTENDER** MAY CROSS!!
WHOOOO
NOW ...
...HOW SHALL WE DO THIS?
MY CHOICE ...

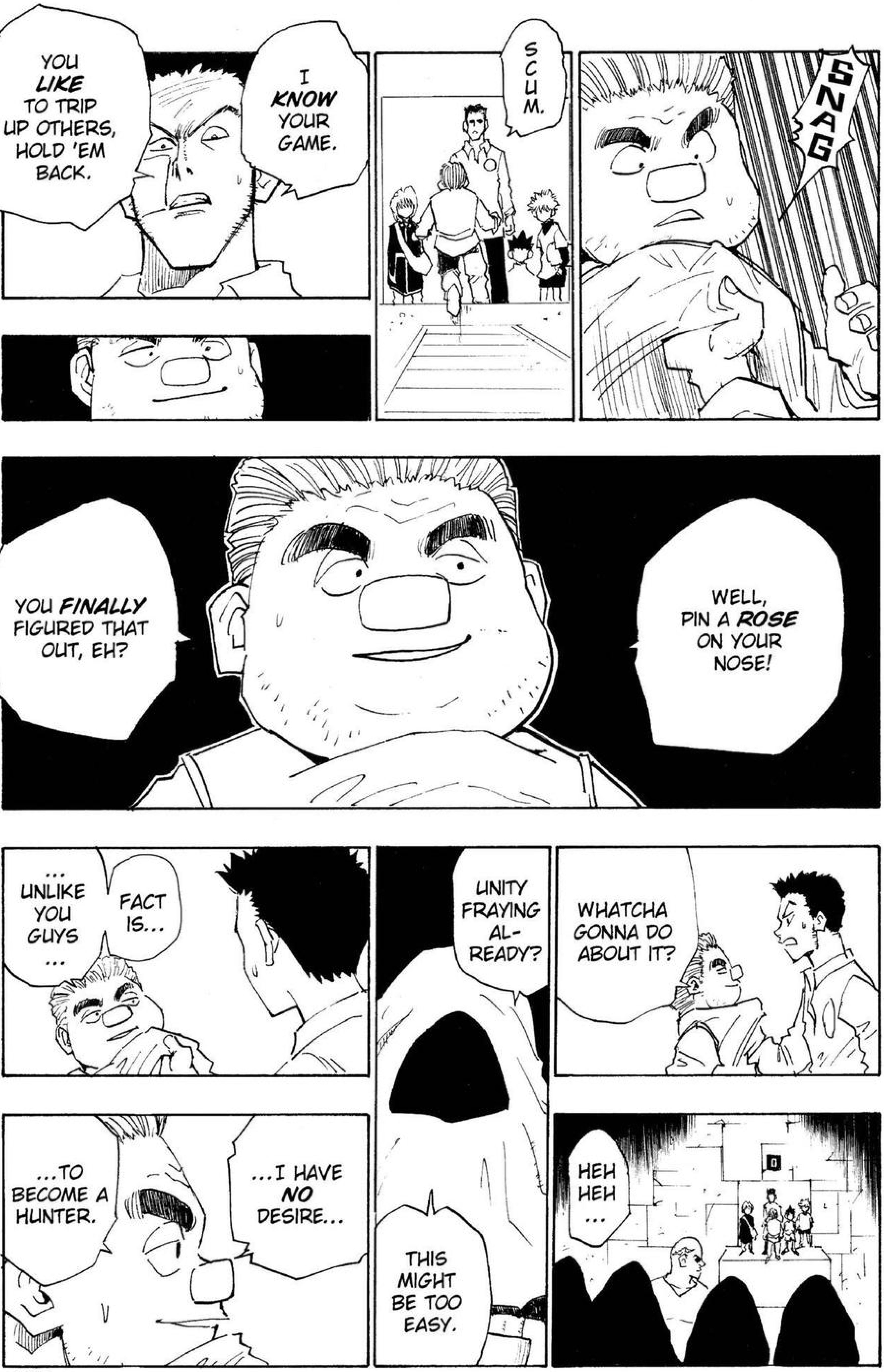

...WOULD BE A FIGHT TO THE DEATH!!
WE GO UNTIL ONE OF US ADMITS DEFEAT...
...OR DIES!!
...
VERY WELL!!
TO THE DEATH!!
SERIOUSLY?!
I RESPECT YOUR DETERMINATION!
SHK
ALL RIGHT...


ZOOSH
...LET'S BEGIN!!
I'M DONE!! YOU'VE BEATEN ME!!!
DROOOM

READ
THIS
WAY


DID HE JUST FOLD?
CAN'T BE.
HE'S FAKIN' THE GUY OUT, OR...
...
WHAT... DID YOU SAY?
I SAID...
...YOU'VE BEATEN ME.
16
HA HA HA...
WHY, THAT ...
HEH HEH HEH.
0
1
BLIP

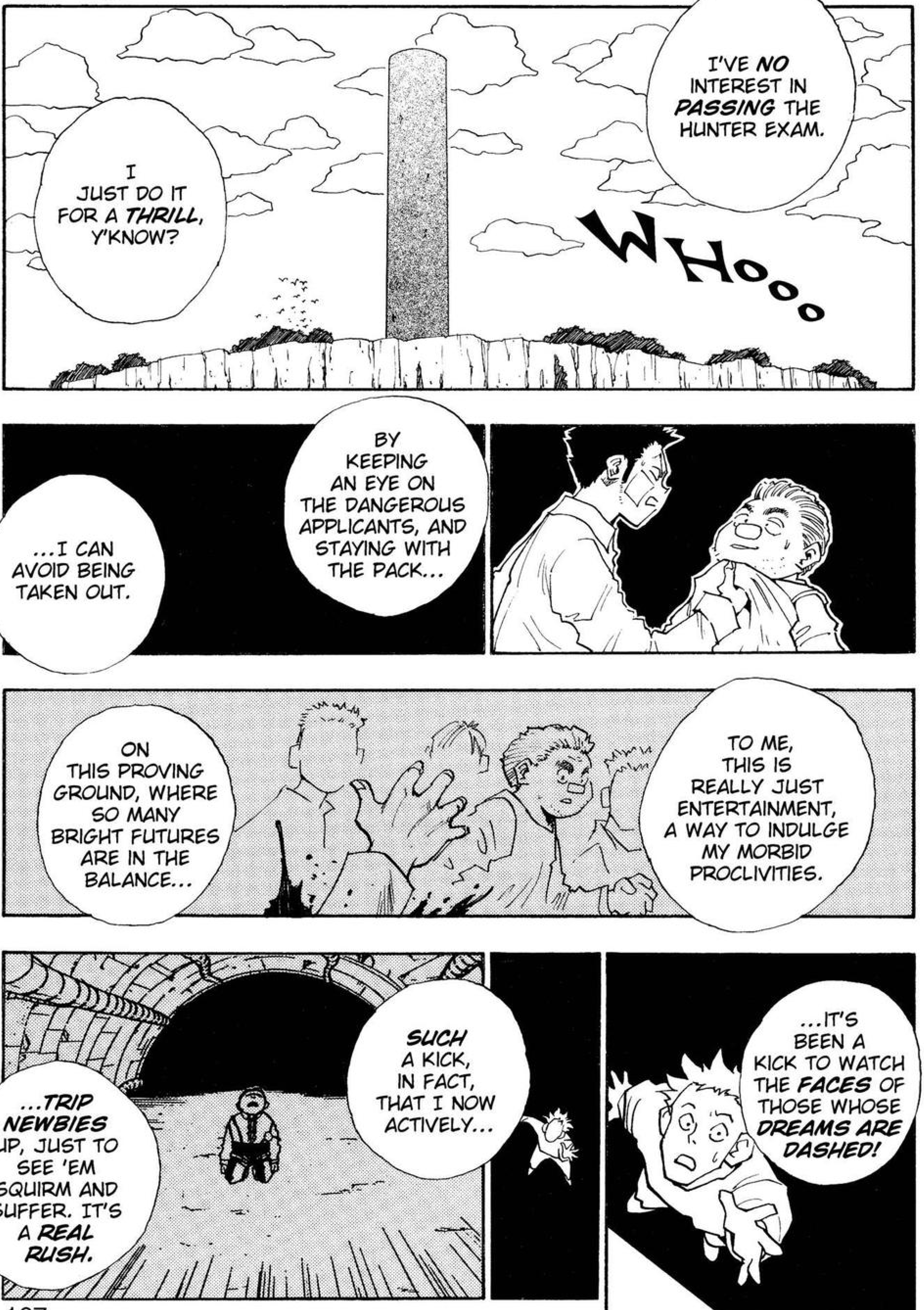

1
TWO TO GO.
1
AND THEN YOU'LL HAVE NO CHOICE...
...BUT TO FAIL THE EXAM.
I'D SAY YOU'RE ALL PRETTY WELL STUCK AT THIS POINT.
STILL, WOULD YOU LIKE TO CONTINUE?
...
WE'LL NEED THREE WINS... OUT OF FOUR!!
I KNOW, REAL LAME...
...BUT HE LOOKED A LOT TOUGHER UP CLOSE.


SNAG
SCUM.
I KNOW YOUR GAME.
YOU LIKE TO TRIP UP OTHERS, HOLD 'EM BACK.
WELL, PIN A ROSE ON YOUR NOSE!
YOU FINALLY FIGURED THAT OUT, EH?
WHATCHA GONNA DO ABOUT IT?
FACT IS…
…UNLIKE YOU GUYS…
…I HAVE NO DESIRE…
…TO BECOME A HUNTER.
UNITY FRAYING AL-READY?
THIS MIGHT BE TOO EASY.
HEH HEH…

Sedokan

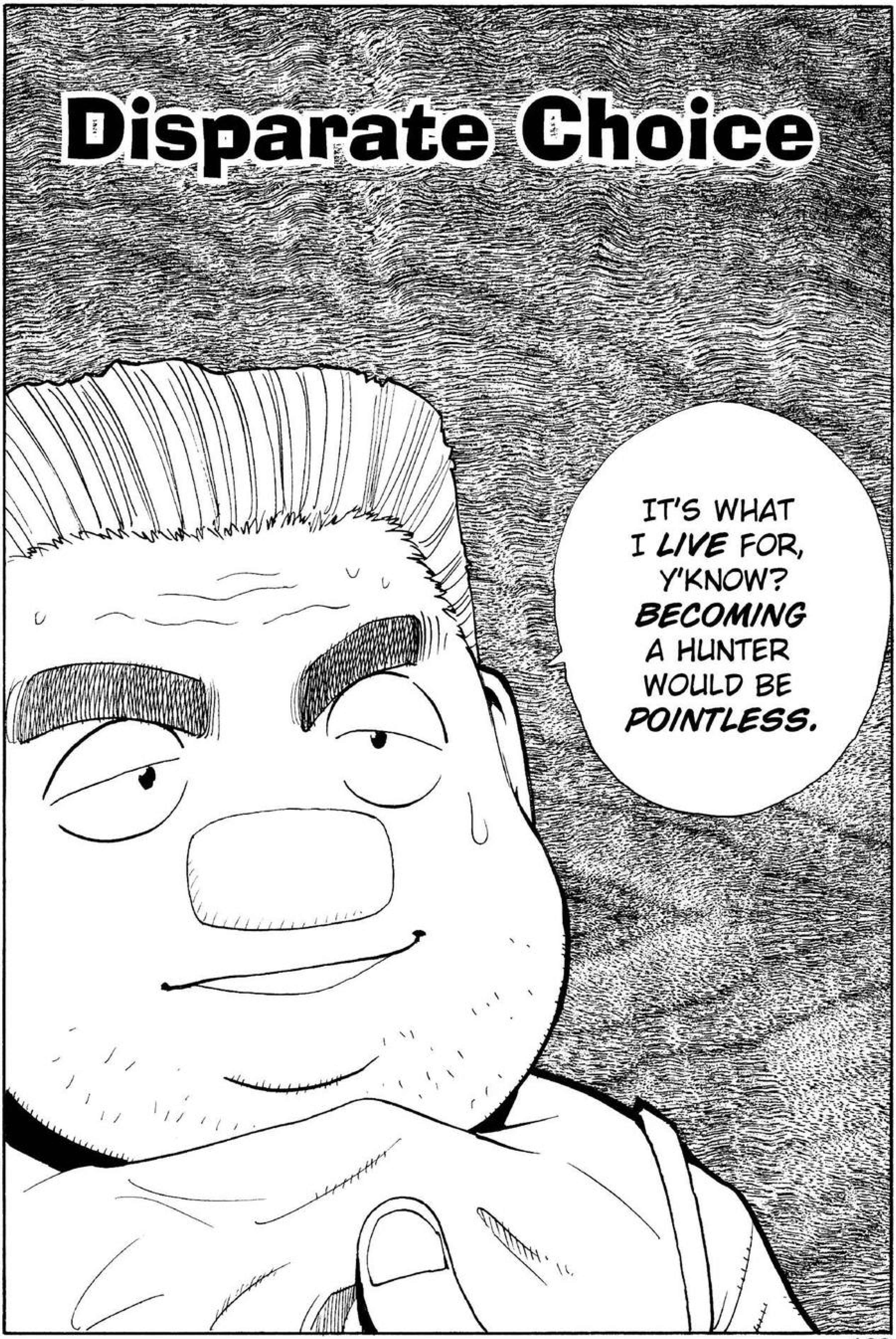
Chapter 17

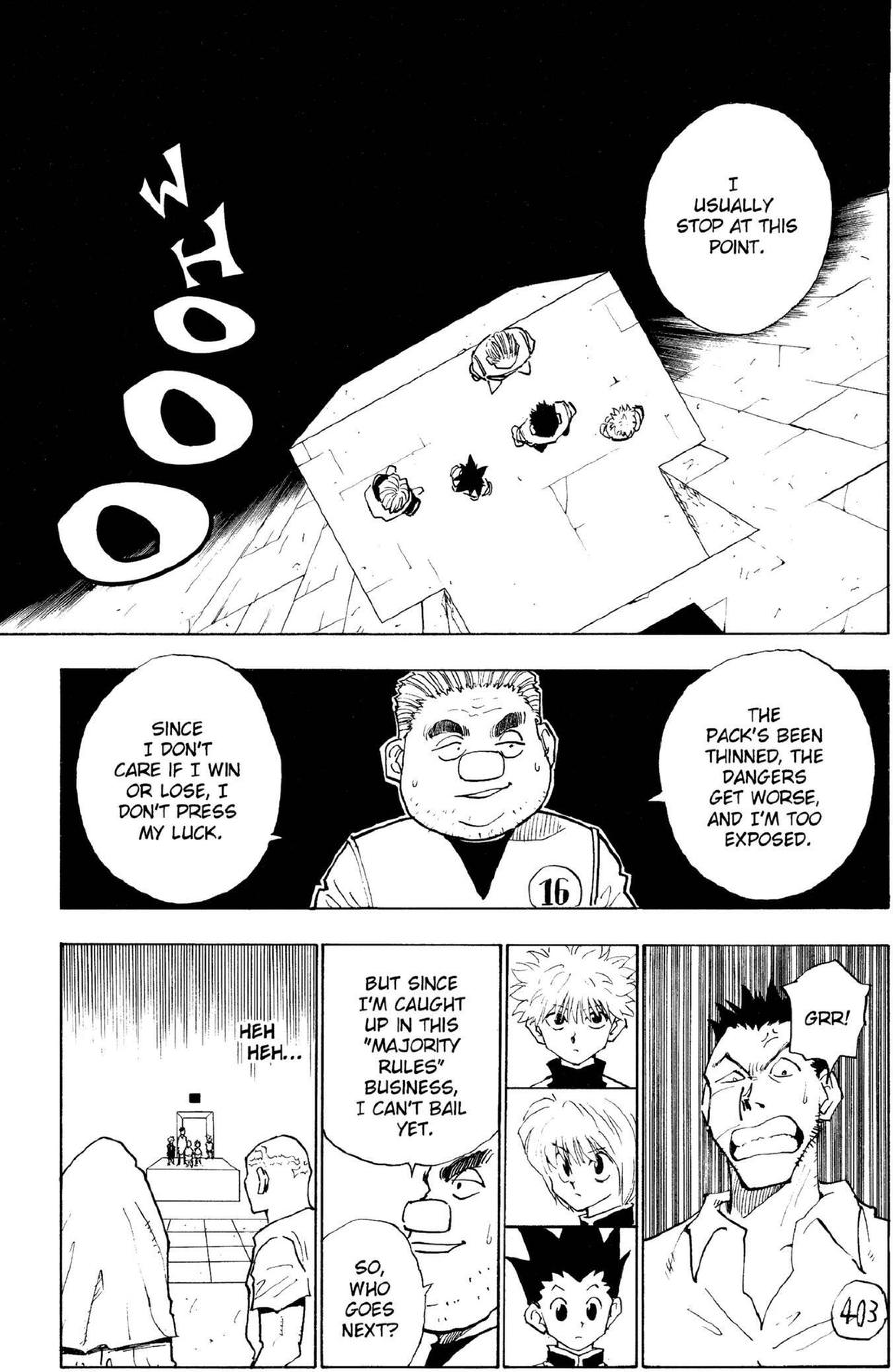
Disparate Choice

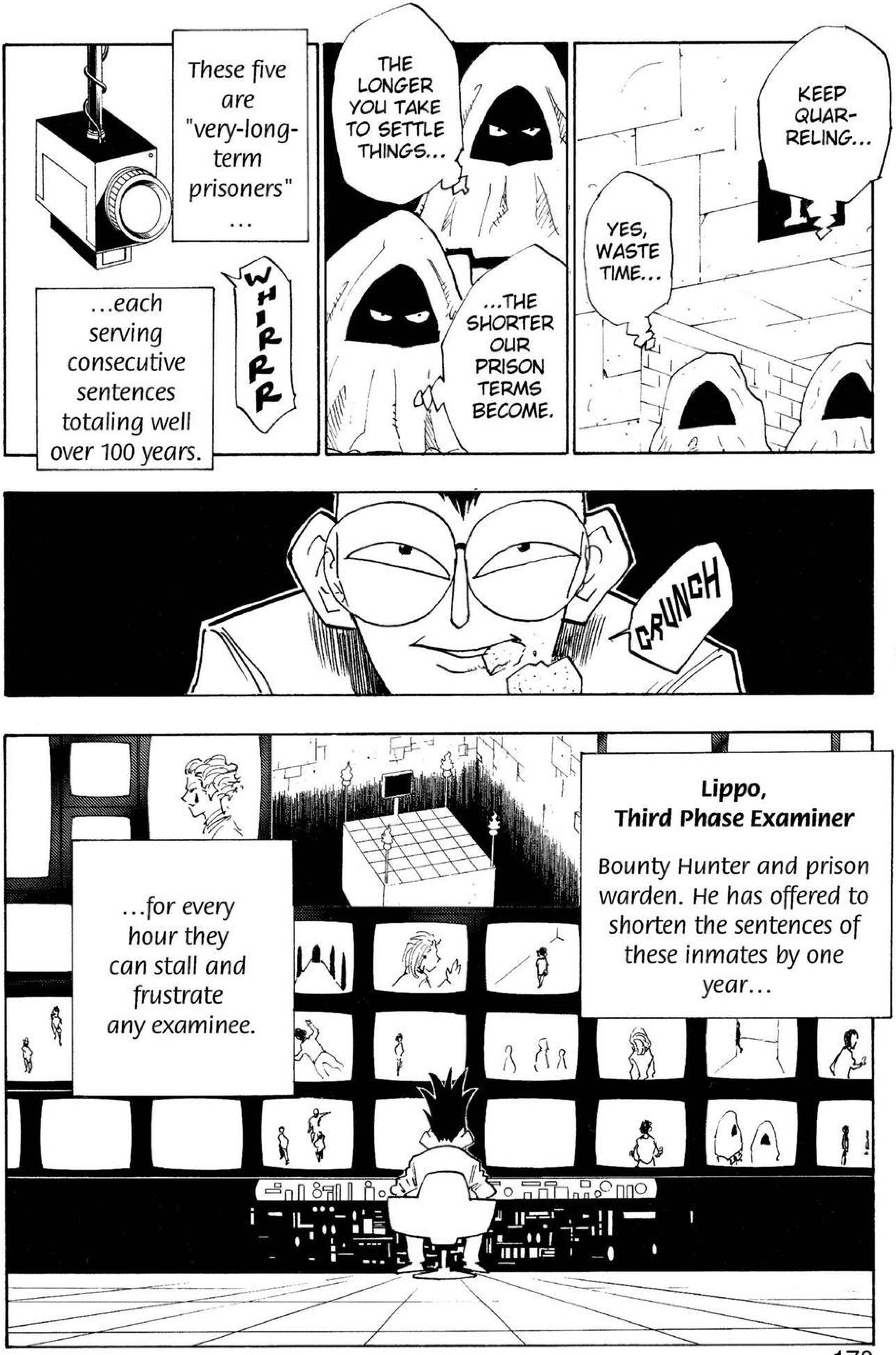

I'VE NO INTEREST IN PASSING THE HUNTER EXAM.
I JUST DO IT FOR A THRILL, Y'KNOW?
WHOOO
BY KEEPING AN EYE ON THE DANGEROUS APPLICANTS, AND STAYING WITH THE PACK...
...I CAN AVOID BEING TAKEN OUT.
TO ME, THIS IS REALLY JUST ENTERTAINMENT, A WAY TO INDULGE MY MORBID PROCLIVITIES.
ON THIS PROVING GROUND, WHERE SO MANY BRIGHT FUTURES ARE IN THE BALANCE...
...IT'S BEEN A KICK TO WATCH THE FACES OF THOSE WHOSE DREAMS ARE DASHED!
SUCH A KICK, IN FACT, THAT I NOW ACTIVELY...
...TRIP NEWBIES UP, JUST TO SEE 'EM SQUIRM AND SUFFER. IT'S A REAL RUSH.

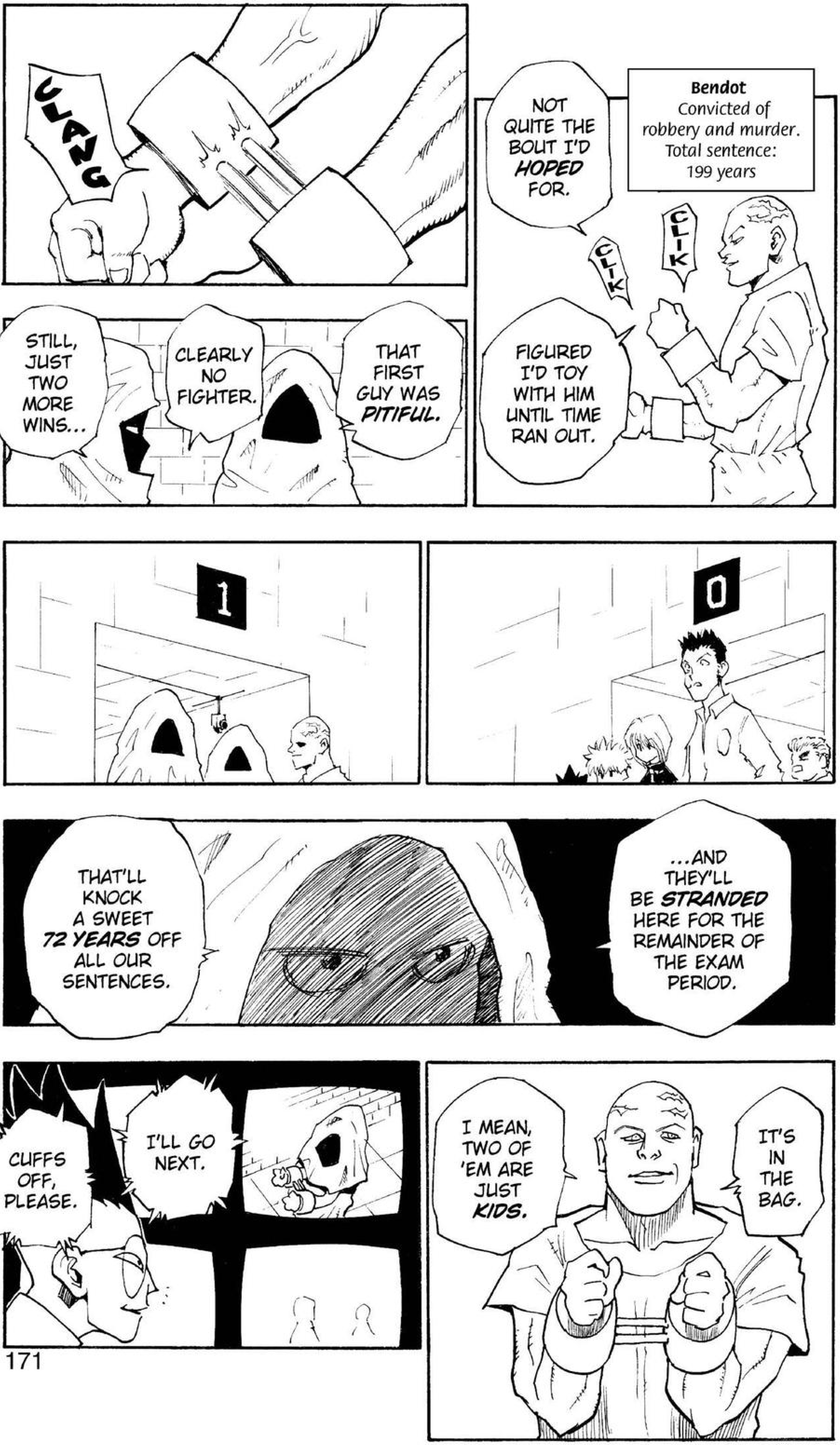
Chapter 17

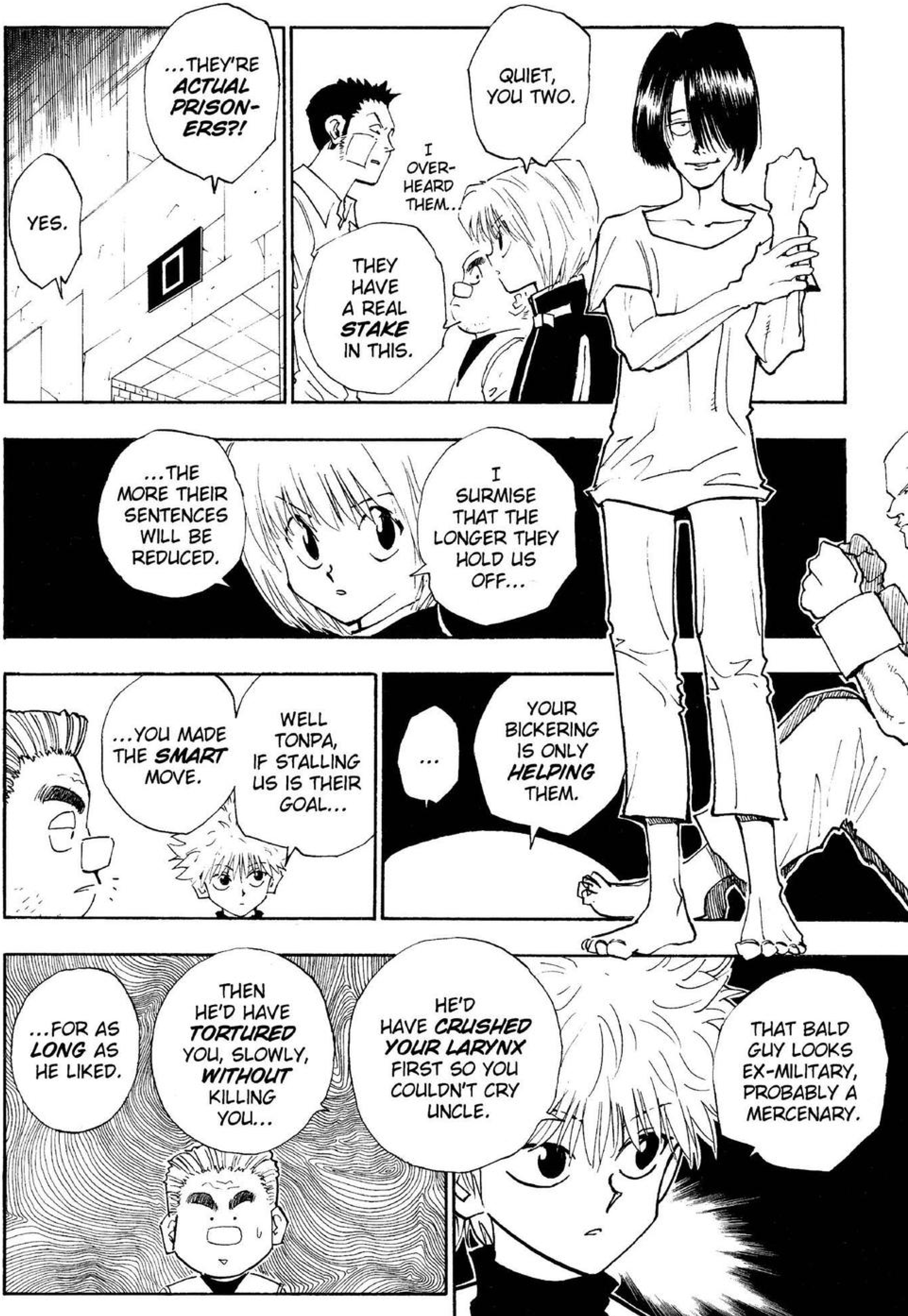
Disparate Choice

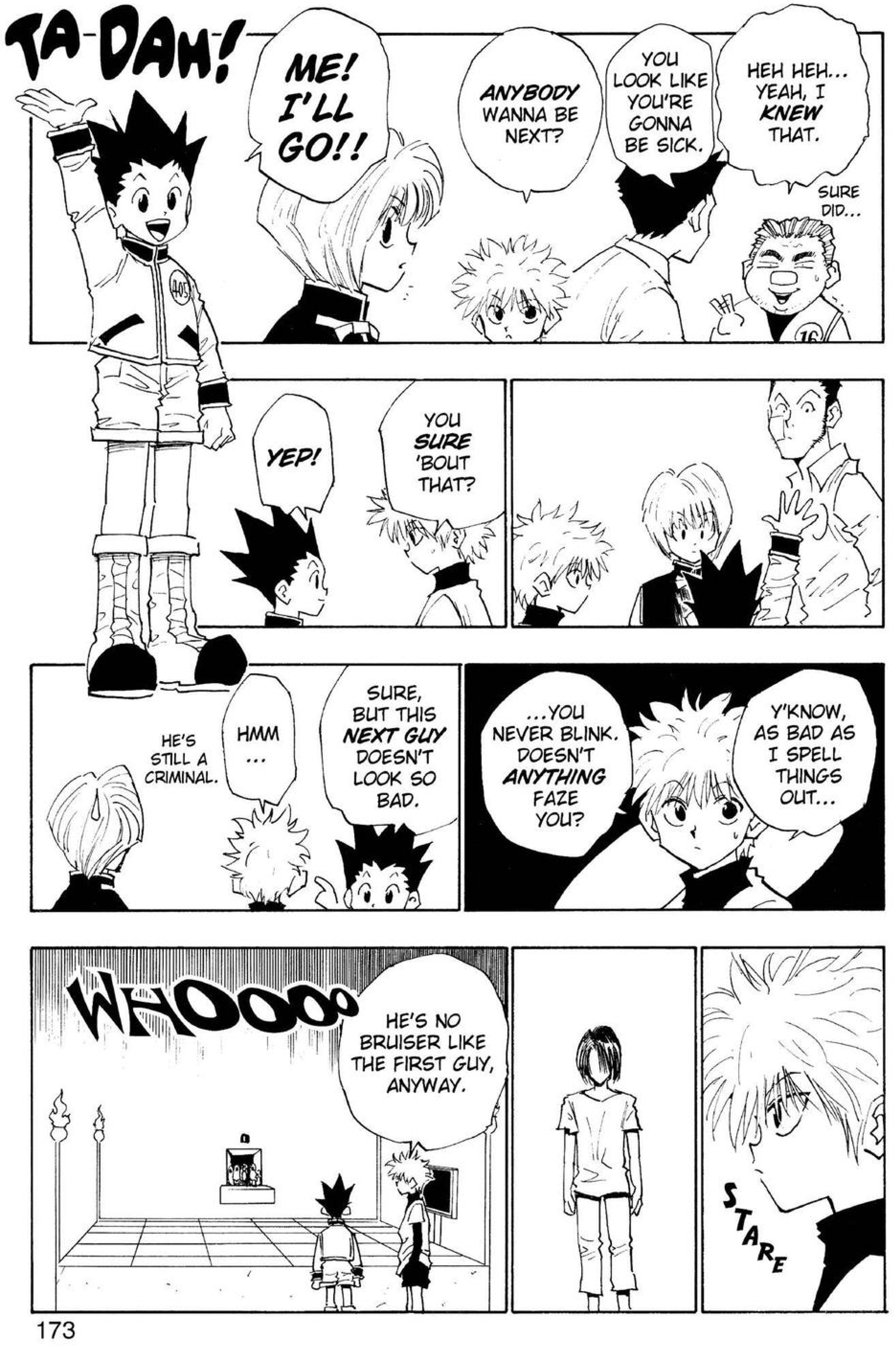

IT'S WHAT I ***LIVE*** FOR, Y'KNOW? ***BECOMING*** A HUNTER WOULD BE ***POINTLESS.***

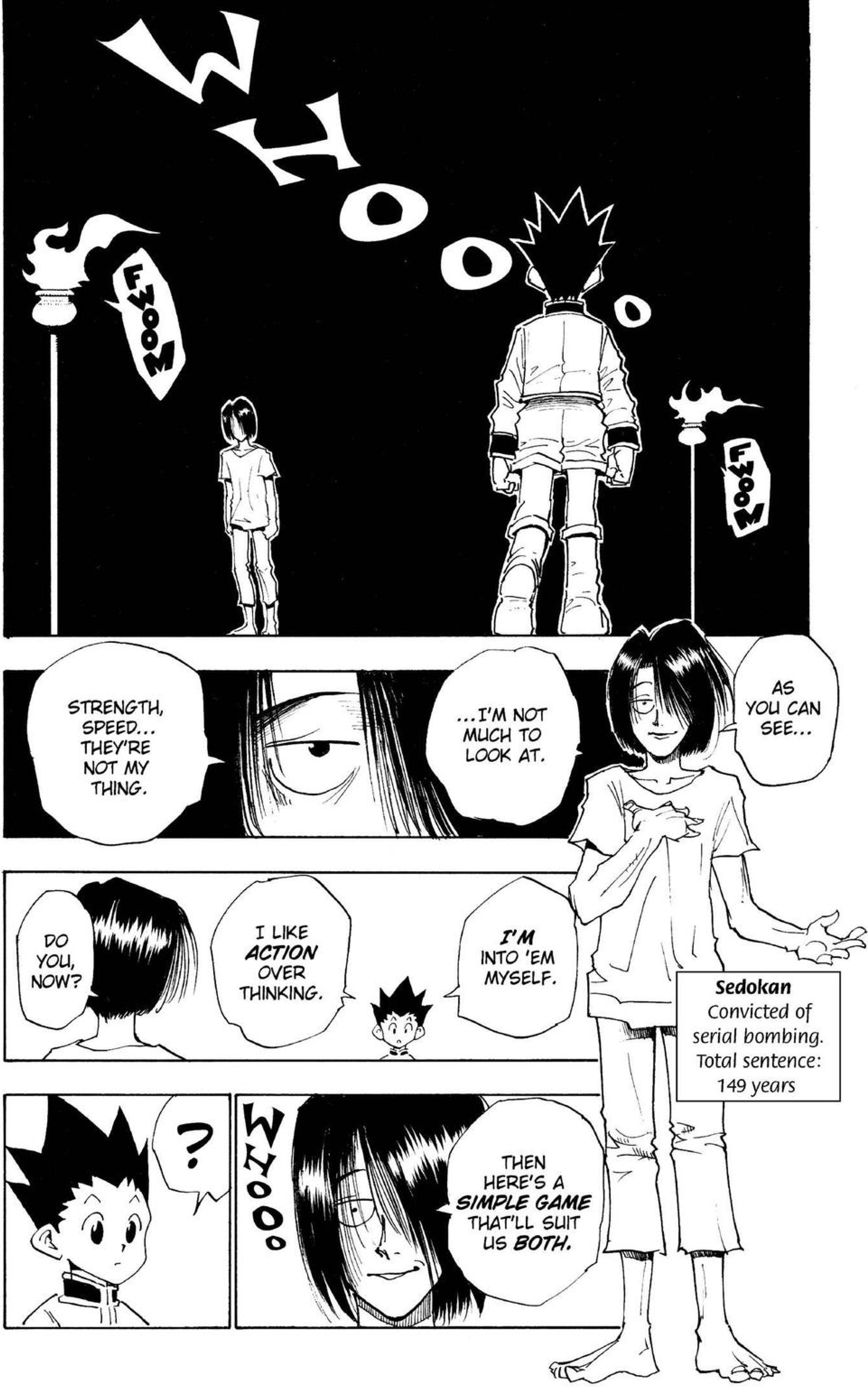

WHOOOO
I USUALLY STOP AT THIS POINT.
THE PACK'S BEEN THINNED, THE DANGERS GET WORSE, AND I'M TOO EXPOSED.
SINCE I DON'T CARE IF I WIN OR LOSE, I DON'T PRESS MY LUCK.
16
GRR!
403
BUT SINCE I'M CAUGHT UP IN THIS "MAJORITY RULES" BUSINESS, I CAN'T BAIL YET.
SO, WHO GOES NEXT?
HEH HEH...

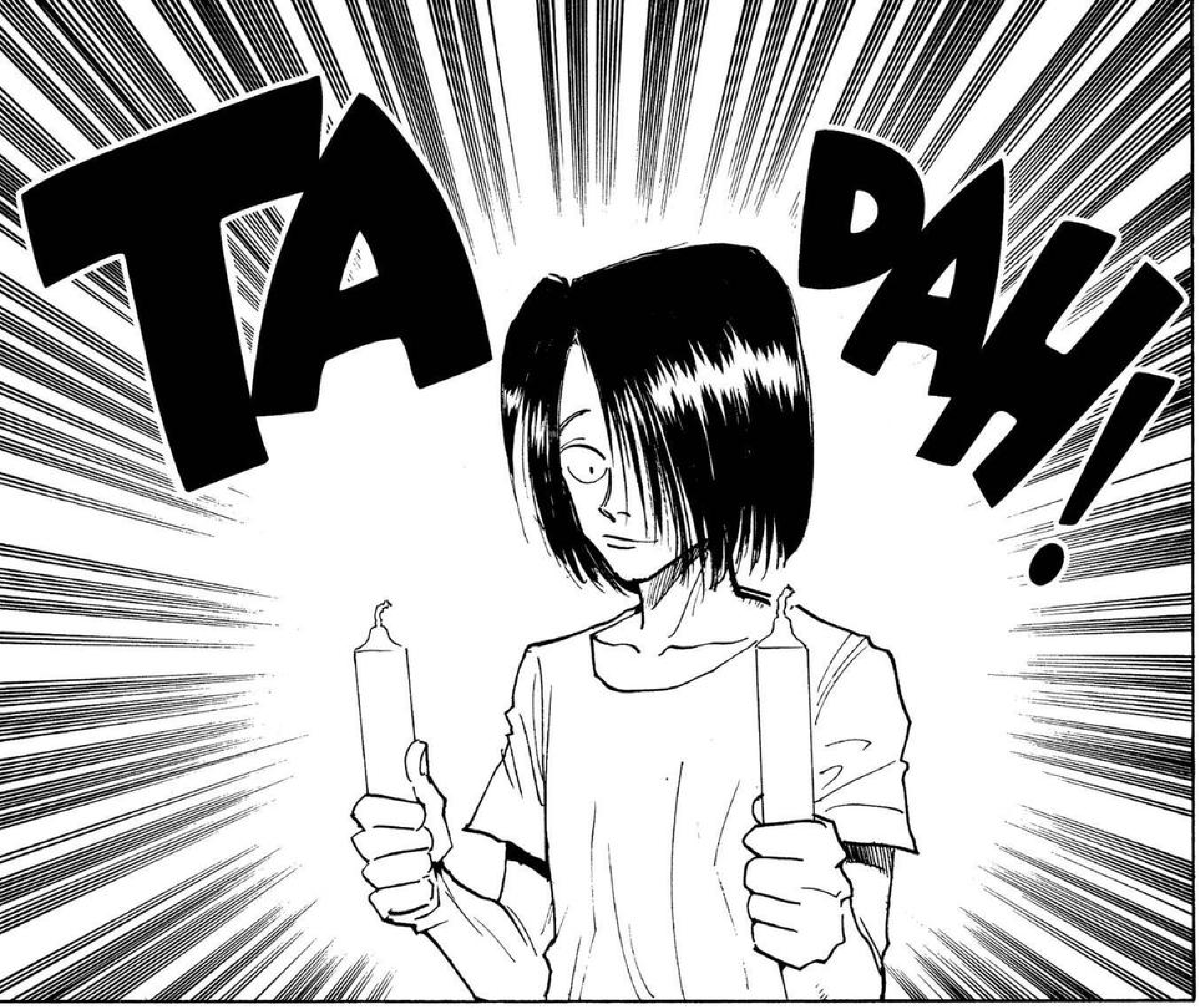

These five are "very-long-term prisoners"…
…each serving consecutive sentences totaling well over 100 years.
WHIRRR
THE LONGER YOU TAKE TO SETTLE THINGS…
…THE SHORTER OUR PRISON TERMS BECOME.
KEEP QUARRELING…
YES, WASTE TIME…
CRUNCH
Lippo, Third Phase Examiner
Bounty Hunter and prison warden. He has offered to shorten the sentences of these inmates by one year…
…for every hour they can stall and frustrate any examinee.

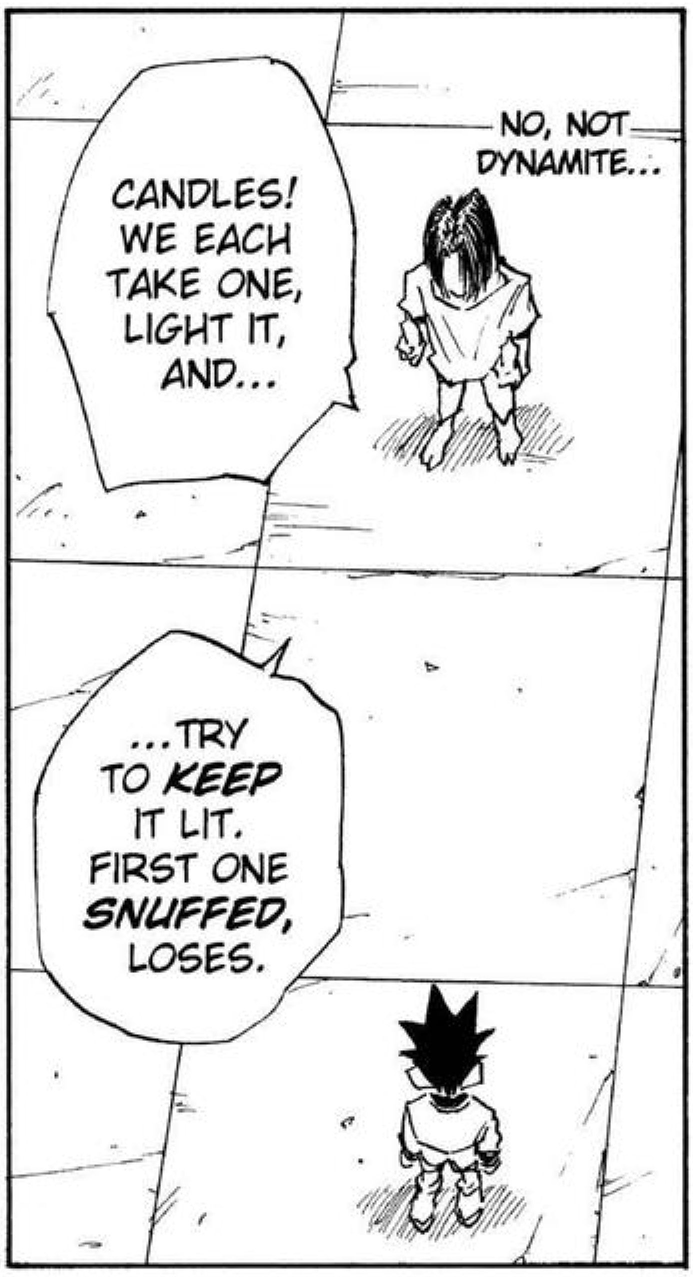

Bendot
Convicted of robbery and murder.
Total sentence:
199 years
NOT QUITE THE BOUT I'D *HOPED* FOR.
CLIK
CLIK
FIGURED I'D TOY WITH HIM UNTIL TIME RAN OUT.
CLANG
THAT FIRST GUY WAS *PITIFUL.*
CLEARLY NO FIGHTER.
STILL, JUST TWO MORE WINS...
0
1
...AND THEY'LL BE *STRANDED* HERE FOR THE REMAINDER OF THE EXAM PERIOD.
THAT'LL KNOCK A SWEET *72 YEARS* OFF ALL OUR SENTENCES.
IT'S IN THE BAG.
I MEAN, TWO OF 'EM ARE JUST *KIDS.*
I'LL GO NEXT.
CUFFS OFF, PLEASE.

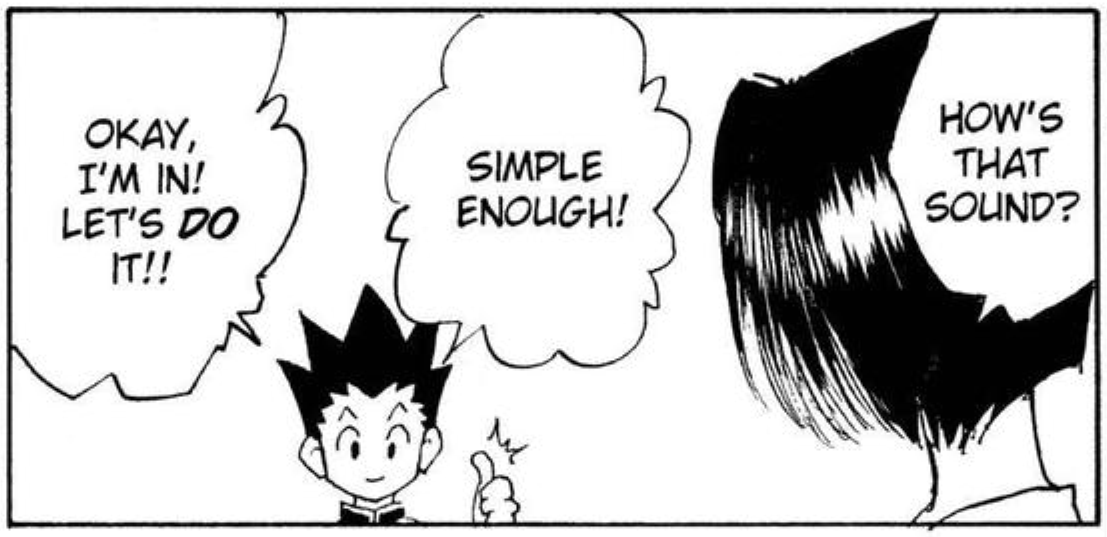

QUIET, YOU TWO.
I OVERHEARD THEM...
THEY HAVE A REAL STAKE IN THIS.
...THEY'RE ACTUAL PRISONERS?!
YES.
I SURMISE THAT THE LONGER THEY HOLD US OFF...
...THE MORE THEIR SENTENCES WILL BE REDUCED.
YOUR BICKERING IS ONLY HELPING THEM.
...
WELL TONPA, IF STALLING US IS THEIR GOAL...
...YOU MADE THE SMART MOVE.
THAT BALD GUY LOOKS EX-MILITARY, PROBABLY A MERCENARY.
HE'D HAVE CRUSHED YOUR LARYNX FIRST SO YOU COULDN'T CRY UNCLE.
THEN HE'D HAVE TORTURED YOU, SLOWLY, WITHOUT KILLING YOU...
...FOR AS LONG AS HE LIKED.

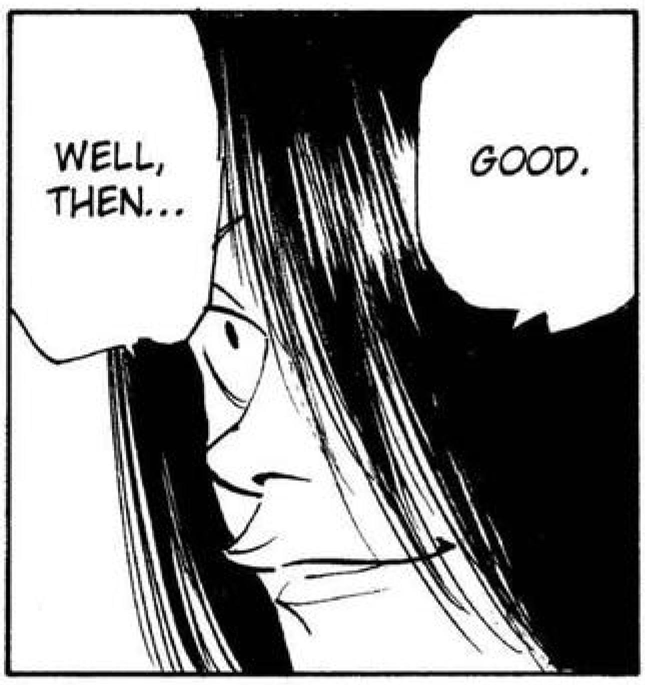

HEH HEH... YEAH, I KNEW THAT.
SURE DID...
YOU LOOK LIKE YOU'RE GONNA BE SICK.
ANYBODY WANNA BE NEXT?
ME! I'LL GO!!
TA-DAH!
YOU SURE 'BOUT THAT?
YEP!
Y'KNOW, AS BAD AS I SPELL THINGS OUT...
...YOU NEVER BLINK. DOESN'T ANYTHING FAZE YOU?
SURE, BUT THIS NEXT GUY DOESN'T LOOK SO BAD.
HMM ...
HE'S STILL A CRIMINAL.
STARE
HE'S NO BRUISER LIKE THE FIRST GUY, ANYWAY.
WHOOOO

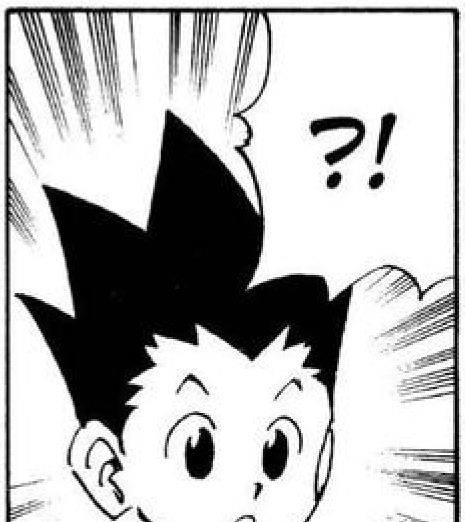

WHOOOO
FWOOM
FWOOM
AS YOU CAN SEE...
...I'M NOT MUCH TO LOOK AT.
STRENGTH, SPEED... THEY'RE NOT MY THING.
Sedokan Convicted of serial bombing. Total sentence: 149 years
I'M INTO 'EM MYSELF.
I LIKE *ACTION* OVER THINKING.
DO YOU, NOW?
WHOOO
THEN HERE'S A *SIMPLE GAME* THAT'LL SUIT US *BOTH.*
?

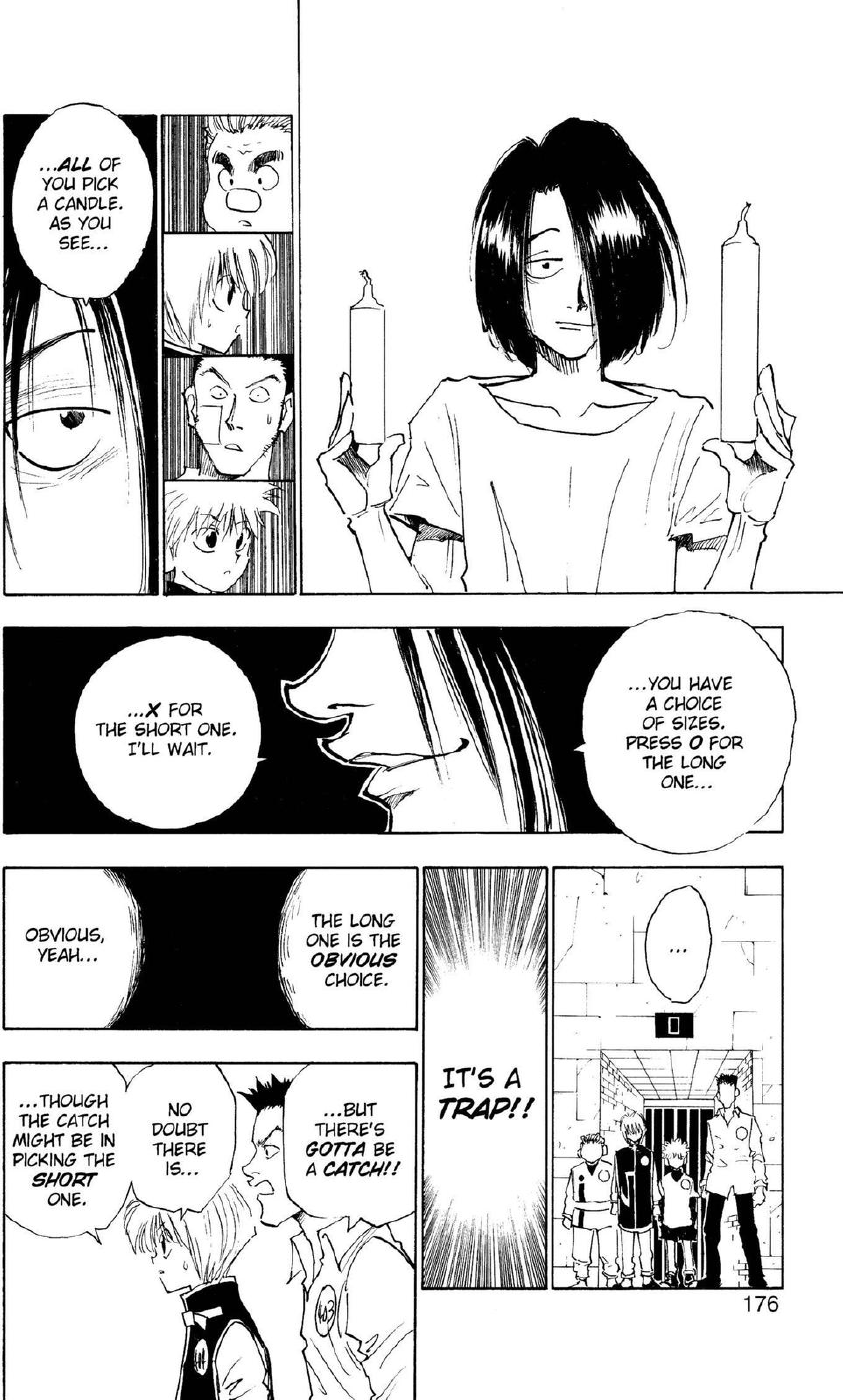

TA DAH!

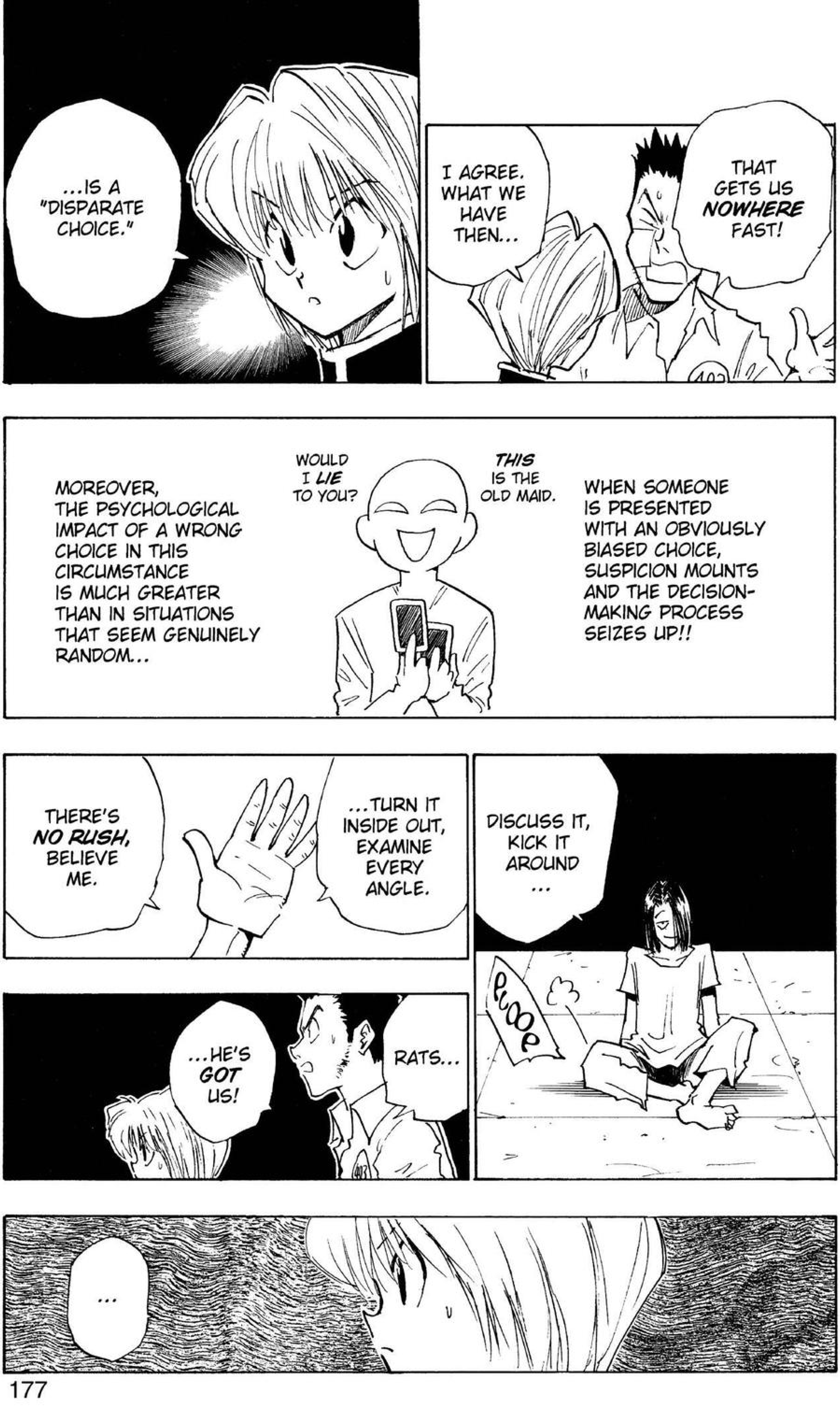

NO, NOT DYNAMITE...
CANDLES! WE EACH TAKE ONE, LIGHT IT, AND...
...TRY TO KEEP IT LIT. FIRST ONE SNUFFED, LOSES.

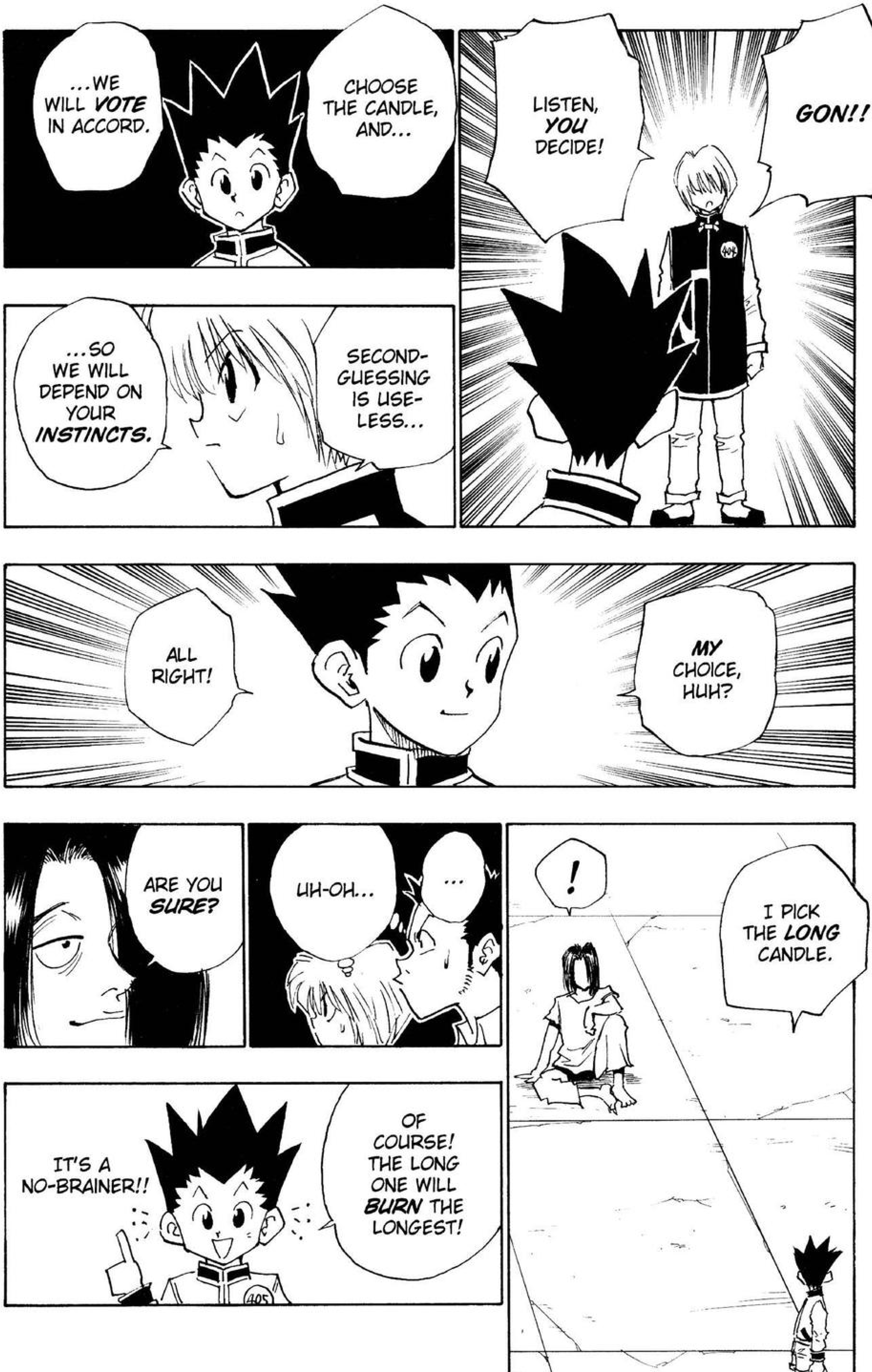

HOW'S THAT SOUND?
SIMPLE ENOUGH!
OKAY, I'M IN! LET'S DO IT!!

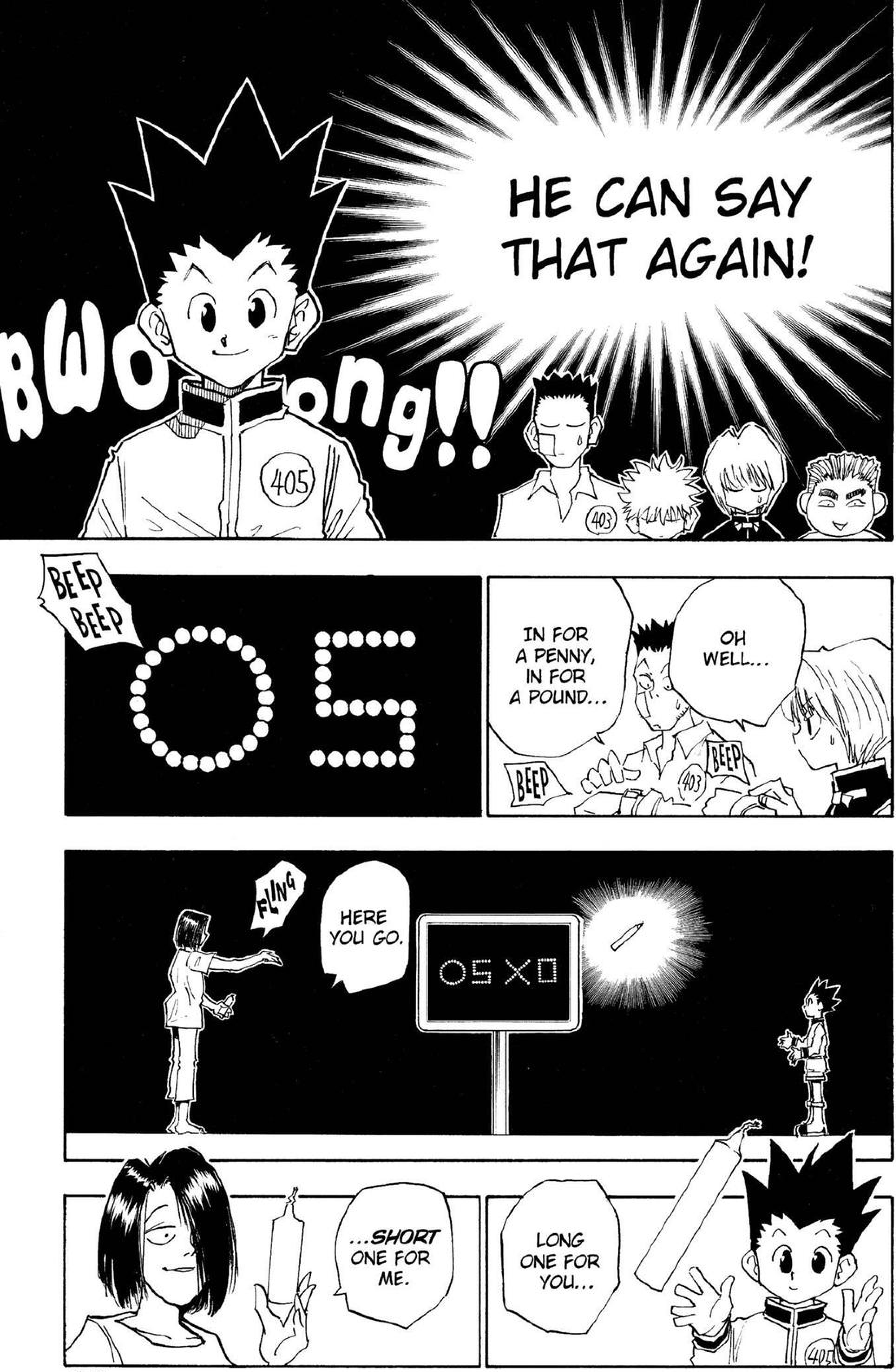

GOOD.
WELL, THEN...

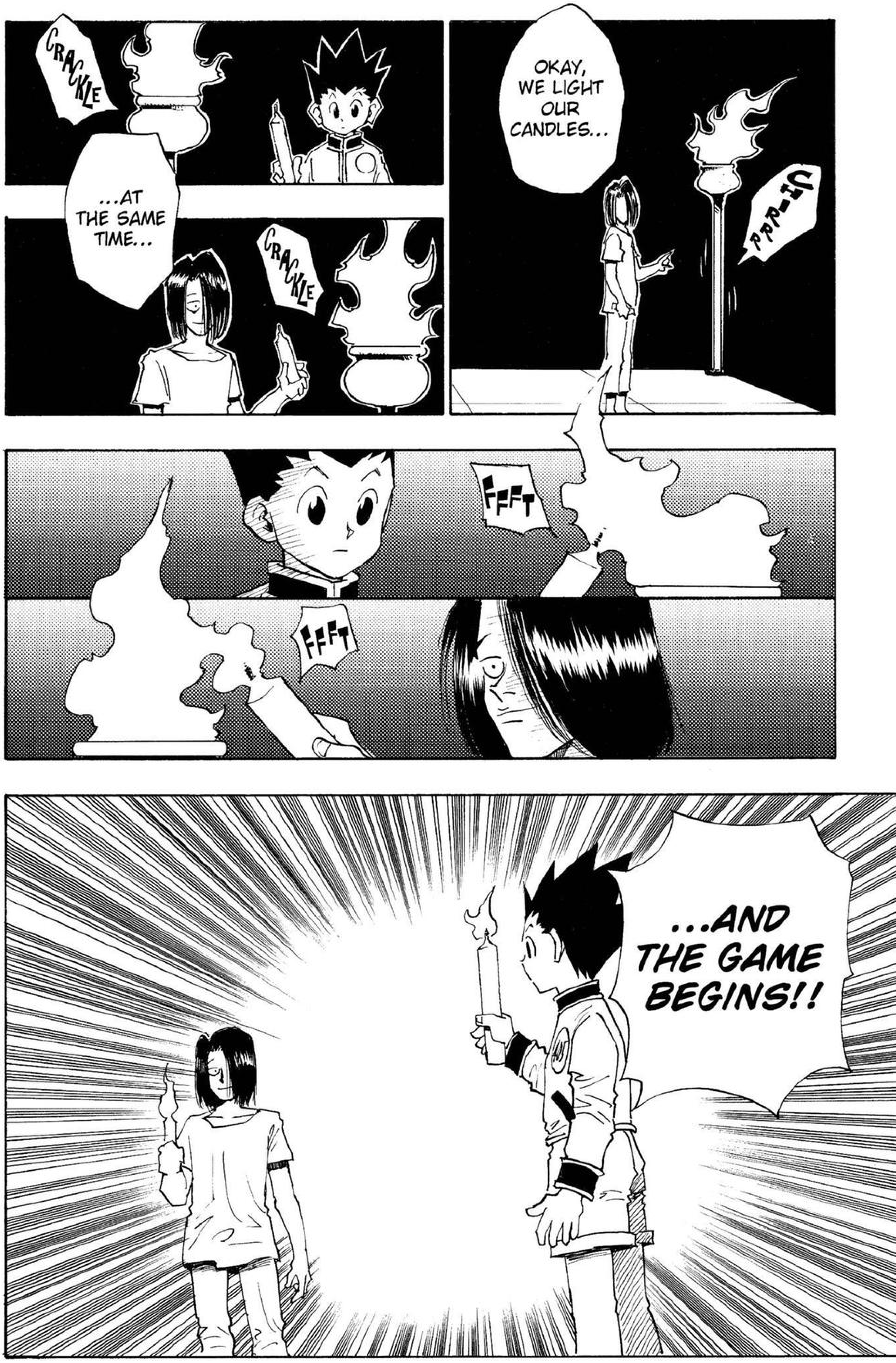

?!

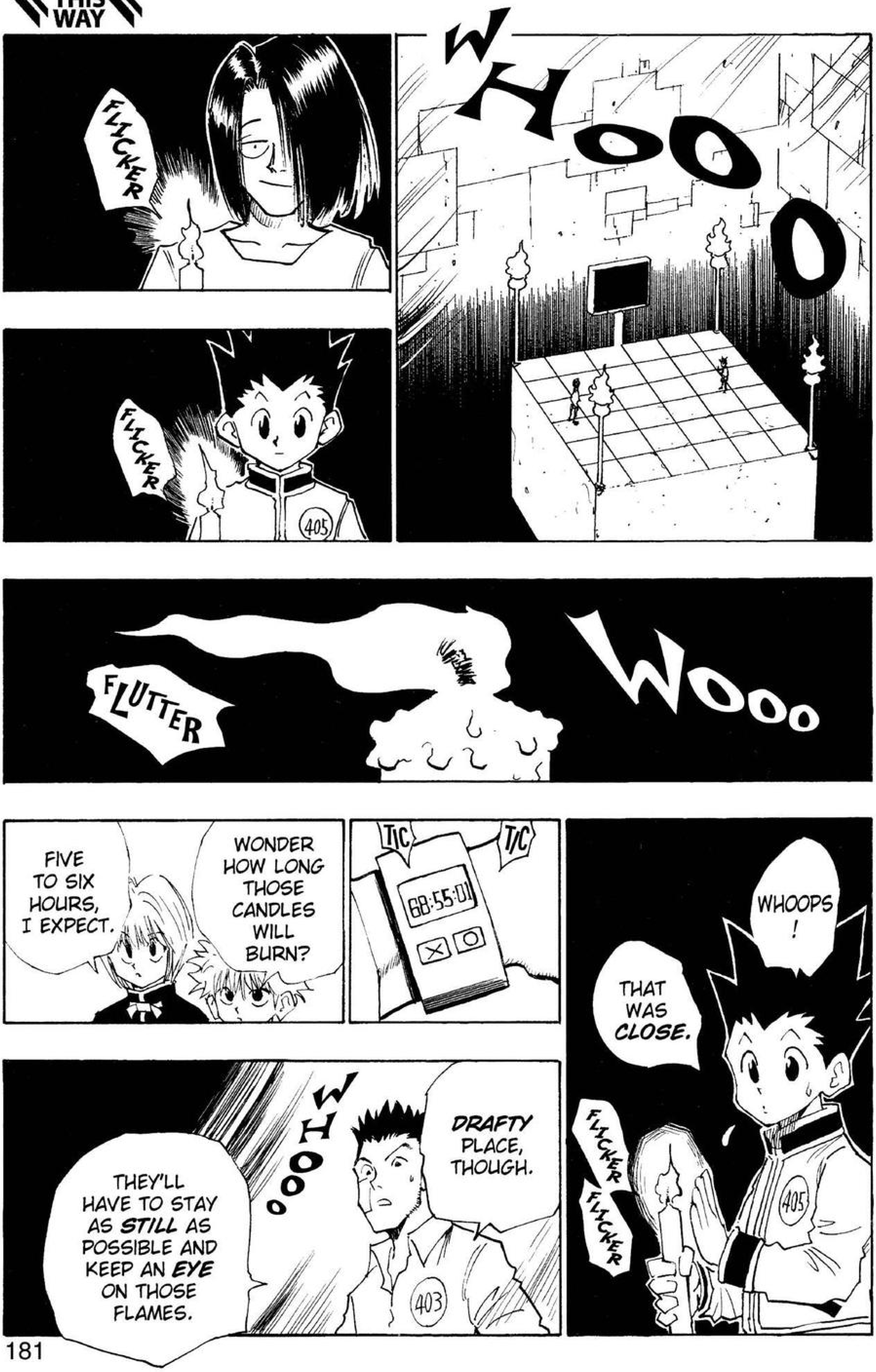

...ALL OF YOU PICK A CANDLE. AS YOU SEE...
...YOU HAVE A CHOICE OF SIZES. PRESS O FOR THE LONG ONE...
...X FOR THE SHORT ONE. I'LL WAIT.
...
O
IT'S A TRAP!!
THE LONG ONE IS THE OBVIOUS CHOICE.
OBVIOUS, YEAH...
...BUT THERE'S GOTTA BE A CATCH!!
NO DOUBT THERE IS...
...THOUGH THE CATCH MIGHT BE IN PICKING THE SHORT ONE.

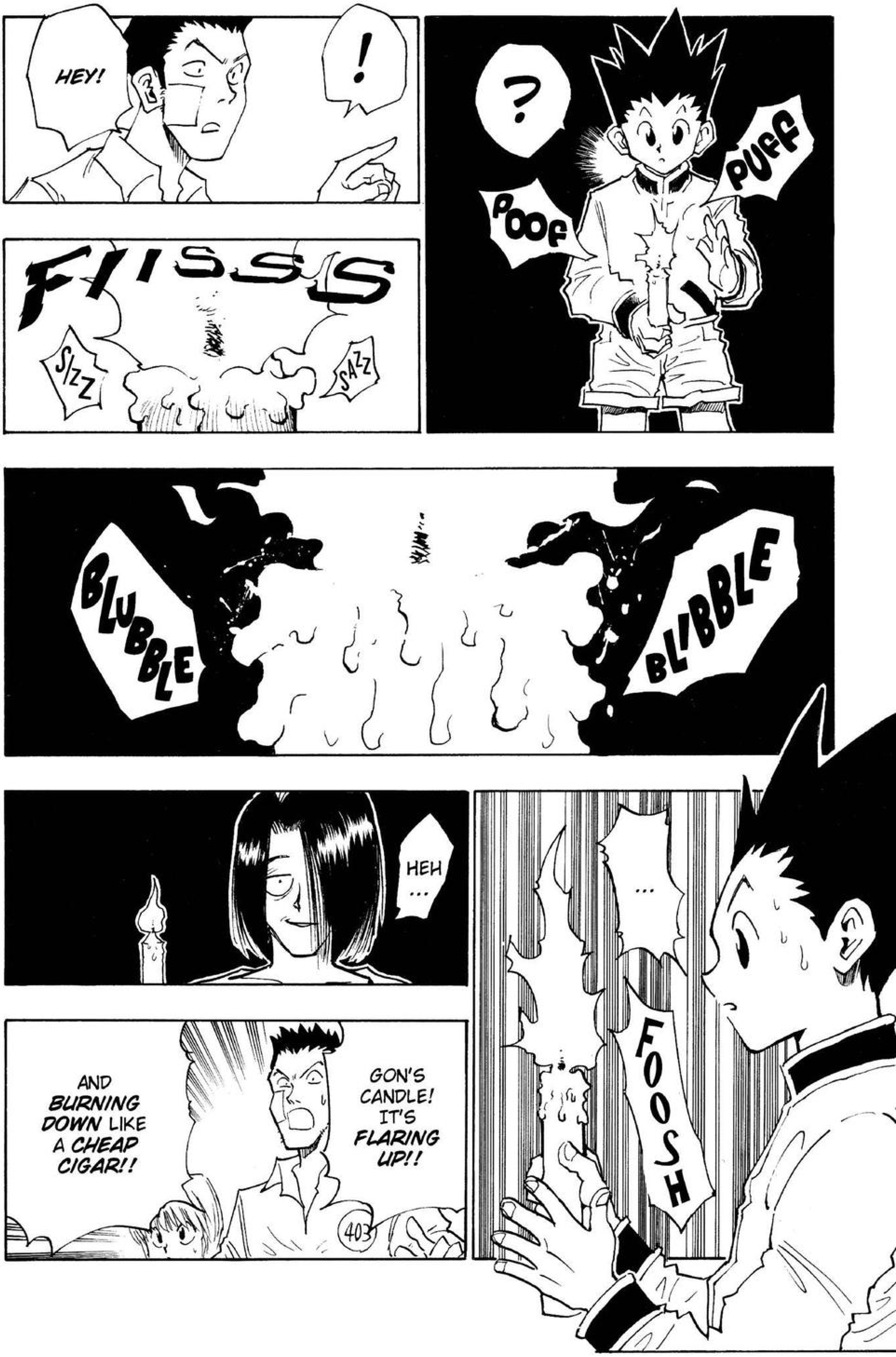

THAT GETS US **NOWHERE** FAST!
I AGREE. WHAT WE HAVE THEN...
...IS A "DISPARATE CHOICE."
WHEN SOMEONE IS PRESENTED WITH AN OBVIOUSLY BIASED CHOICE, SUSPICION MOUNTS AND THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS SEIZES UP!!
THIS IS THE OLD MAID.
WOULD I ***LIE*** TO YOU?
MOREOVER, THE PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT OF A WRONG CHOICE IN THIS CIRCUMSTANCE IS MUCH GREATER THAN IN SITUATIONS THAT SEEM GENUINELY RANDOM...
DISCUSS IT, KICK IT AROUND...
...TURN IT INSIDE OUT, EXAMINE EVERY ANGLE.
THERE'S ***NO RUSH,*** BELIEVE ME.
Puooe
RATS...
...HE'S ***GOT*** US!
...

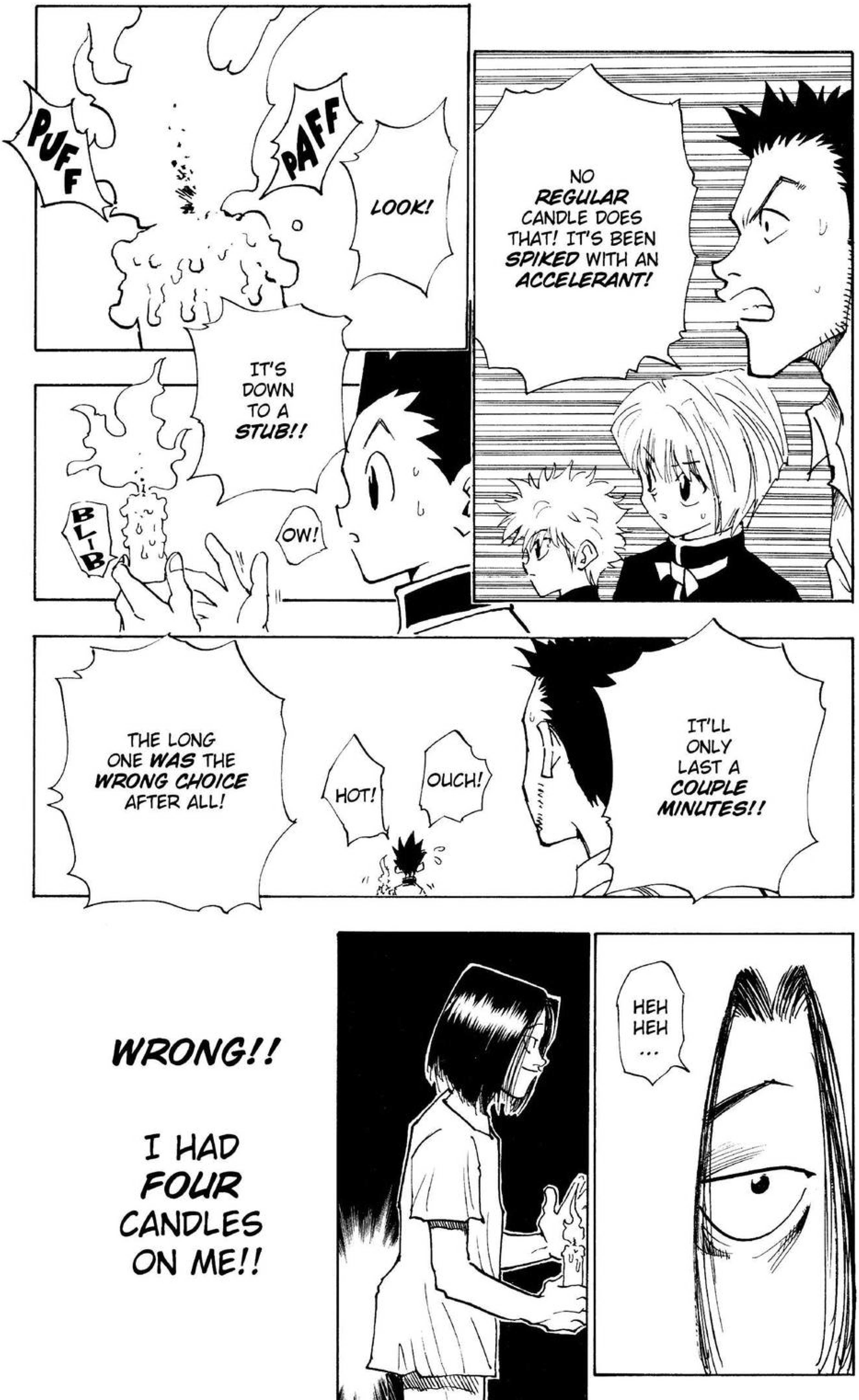

GON!!
LISTEN, YOU DECIDE!
CHOOSE THE CANDLE, AND...
...WE WILL VOTE IN ACCORD.
SECOND-GUESSING IS USELESS...
...SO WE WILL DEPEND ON YOUR INSTINCTS.
MY CHOICE, HUH?
ALL RIGHT!
I PICK THE LONG CANDLE.
!
...
UH-OH...
ARE YOU SURE?
OF COURSE! THE LONG ONE WILL BURN THE LONGEST!
IT'S A NO-BRAINER!!
404
405

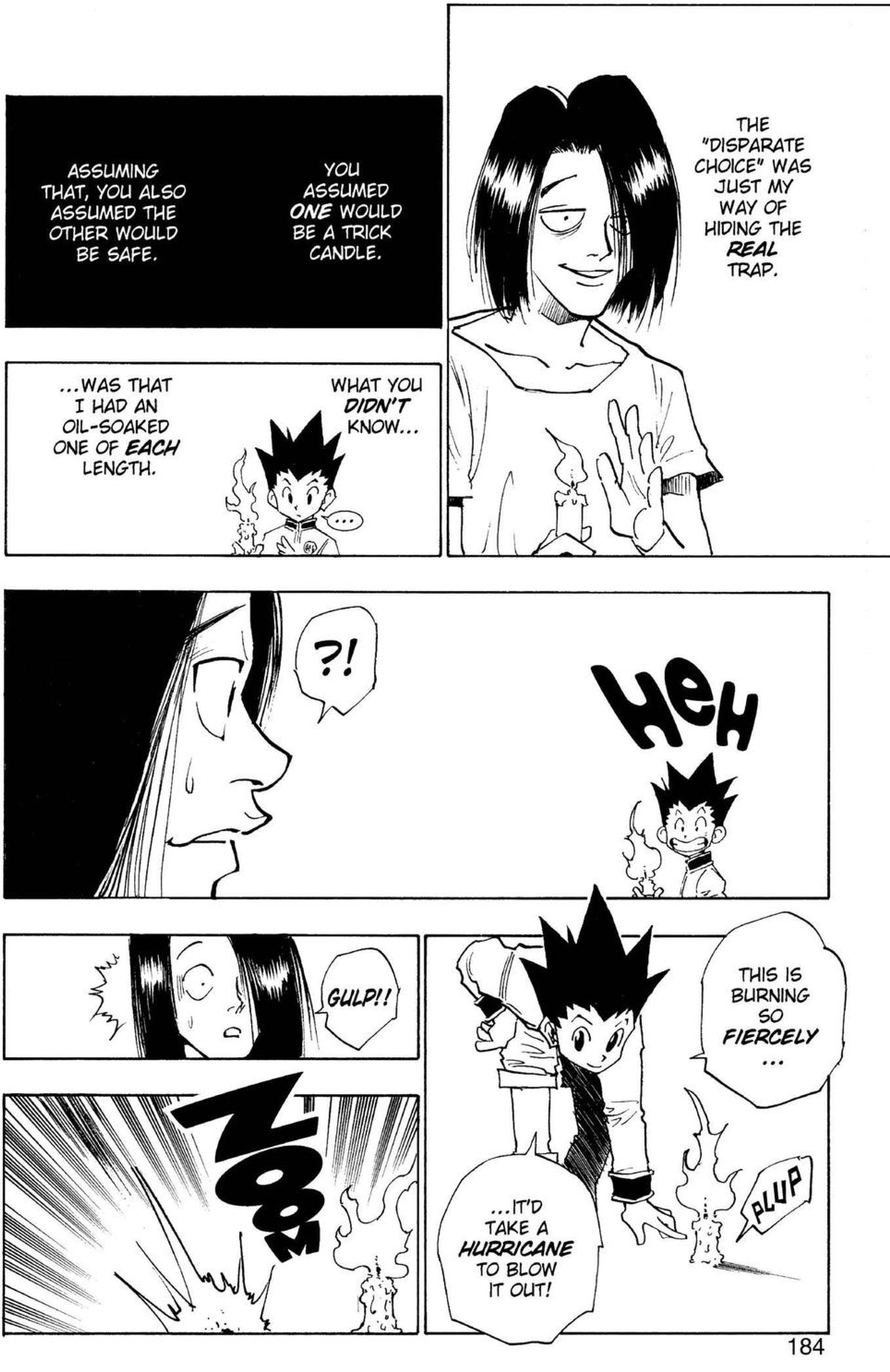

HE CAN SAY THAT AGAIN!
BWOOong!!
405
403
OH WELL...
IN FOR A PENNY, IN FOR A POUND...
BEEP
BEEP
403
BEEP BEEP
05
FLING
HERE YOU GO.
05 X □
LONG ONE FOR YOU...
405
...*SHORT* ONE FOR ME.

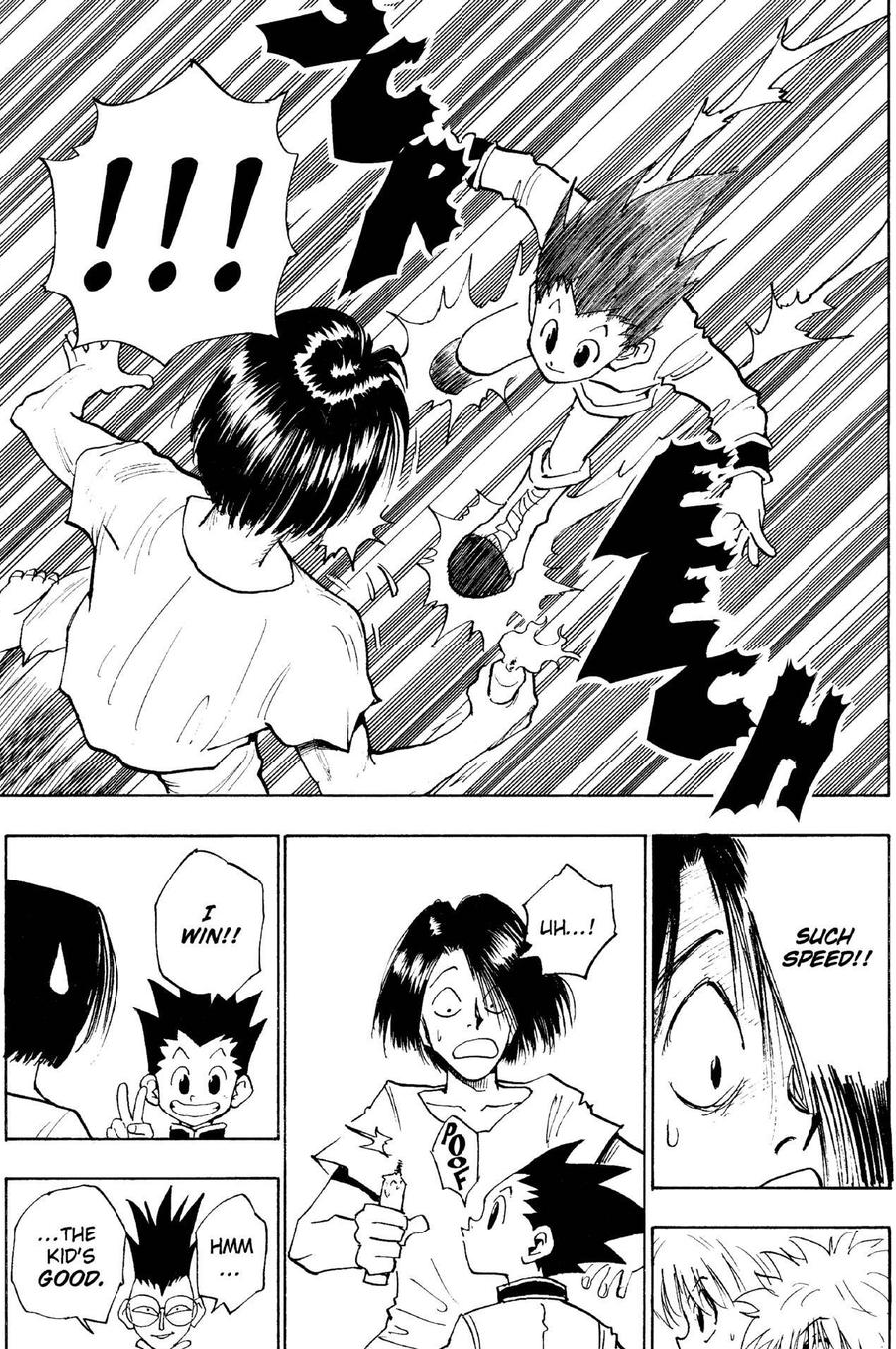

OKAY, WE LIGHT OUR CANDLES...
CHIRRP
CRACKLE
...AT THE SAME TIME...
CRACKLE
FFFT
FFFT
...AND THE GAME BEGINS!!


WHOOOO
FLICKER
FLICKER
FLUTTER
Wooo
WHOOPS!
THAT WAS CLOSE.
FLICKER
FLICKER
TIC
TIC
68:55:01
WONDER HOW LONG THOSE CANDLES WILL BURN?
FIVE TO SIX HOURS, I EXPECT.
405
DRAFTY PLACE, THOUGH.
WHOOO
THEY'LL HAVE TO STAY AS STILL AS POSSIBLE AND KEEP AN EYE ON THOSE FLAMES.
403


?
POOF
PUFF
HEY!
!
FIISSS
SIZZ
SAZZ
BLIBBLE
BLUBBLE
...
FOOSH
HEH ...
GON'S CANDLE! IT'S *FLARING UP!!*
AND *BURNING DOWN* LIKE A *CHEAP CIGAR!!*


PUFF
PAFF
LOOK!
IT'S DOWN TO A STUB!!
BLIB
OW!
NO REGULAR CANDLE DOES THAT! IT'S BEEN SPIKED WITH AN ACCELERANT!
IT'LL ONLY LAST A COUPLE MINUTES!!
OUCH!
HOT!
THE LONG ONE WAS THE WRONG CHOICE AFTER ALL!
HEH HEH ...
WRONG!!
I HAD FOUR CANDLES ON ME!!


THE "DISPARATE CHOICE" WAS JUST MY WAY OF HIDING THE **REAL** TRAP.
YOU ASSUMED **ONE** WOULD BE A TRICK CANDLE.
ASSUMING THAT, YOU ALSO ASSUMED THE OTHER WOULD BE SAFE.
WHAT YOU **DIDN'T** KNOW...
...WAS THAT I HAD AN OIL-SOAKED ONE OF **EACH** LENGTH.
...
HEH
?!
THIS IS BURNING SO **FIERCELY**...
...IT'D TAKE A **HURRICANE** TO BLOW IT OUT!
PLUP
GULP!!
NOOM


!!!
SUCH SPEED!!
UH...!
POOF
I WIN!!
HMM ...
...THE KID'S GOOD.